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Edward Hale's

REFLECTIONS

Book UPON 1731.

REASON.



Corndale. Shelf 1.

REFLECTIONS
Upon Hales book.

REASON.

The THIRD EDITION, Corrected and Enlarged.

Εἰς τοῖον ἔτι χρόνον αἰγαλέλγη τὸ πεδίσων αἰξίων σεαυτὸν,
καὶ σὺ μηδενὶ περιθεαίνει τὸν διαιρούντα λόγον; οὐδη
χῶν αἰξίωσον σεαυτὸν βιών ὡς τέλειον καὶ ἀριστοπλούτιον, καὶ τῶν
πολέμων Φαινόμενον ἔτι σοι νόμος απαραβατος.

Epictetus, cap. 75.



by Wildrop.

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REFLECTIONS

ON THE
MORALS

OF

MORALS

ERRATA.

PAGE 1. ~~l.~~ dele ~~l.~~ p. 4. l. ~~l.~~ for *Proportions* read *Propositions*.
p. 11. l. 19. for *Figures* 1. *Figures*. p. 19. l. 15. for *its* 1. *this*. p.
68. l. 18. after *unreasonable* add *for him to do to me, the same I*
judge reasonable or unreasonable. p. 22. l. 17. after *Torments*, add
of Hell. p. 80. l. 4. at the Asterisk, should be inserted what is
thrown into the Margin, *Wherewith Simplicius, &c.* p. 90. l. 10.
for *प्राप्ति* 1. *प्राप्ति*!





REFLECTIONS UPON REASON.



HE Confusion introduced into our Language, by the Abuse of Words, which through length of Time have been perverted from their natural and primitive Signification, has been observed and lamented by all that wish well to the Interest and Advancement of Truth, and the Quiet and Peace of Mankind, and many laudable Attempts have been made by learned and good Men to rescue us from that lamentable Abuse, thereby to prevent that Misunderstanding, Perplexity, and Obscurity that attend all those Writers, especially in Matters of Controversy, who, for

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else

want of understanding the Terms of the Question in Debate, misunderstand and misrepresent each other, inflame each other's Passions, perplex and confound the Question, till at last neither Side knows what they say, or whereof they affirm. Amongst the many Attempts that have been made this Way, I have often wish'd ~~it~~ that some judicious Hand would endeavour to explain and set in a right Light that much perverted and abused Word **REASON**, the Abuse of which has been, and continues to be, as fatal to the Interests of Religion, the Cause of Truth, and the Peace and Welfare of the World, as any Error in Language can be supposed to be. We live in an Age of Liberty, where a Sett of bold and generous Spirits have exerted their united Strength, to deliver their half-witted superstitious Friends and Countrymen from the Slavery of Priestcraft, the vain Terrors of Religion, and stupid Regards to Authority, especially (what the Bigots call) Ecclesiastical, by boldly and resolutely asserting the Dignity and Prerogative of *Human Reason*, who yet for want of a right understanding of the Word, have been forced to defend it in a most unreasonable Manner with Nonsense and Absurdity: In short, there is scarce a Word in the *English* Tongue of a more general, uncertain, indeterminate Signification. Every wrong-headed Mortal calls his *Misunderstanding* his *Reason*; every Man's different Way of apprehending or misapprehending Things is called *Reason*: So that there is no Opinion so absurd, no Notion so silly, no Position so monstrous, but it is defended and justified by what they call *Reason*. And should a Man of the finest

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Understanding attempt to rectify the false Notions of one of these minute Philosophers, should he lay open his Sophistry, and endeavour to give him a right View of Things, he adheres pertinaciously to his first false Notions; and tho' he can neither answer the Arguments alledged against him, nor offer any in his own Defence but what have been clearly answered, yet he abides by his Prejudices which he calls his *Reason*, and in which he thinks himself bound to acquiesce. *His Reason* (he says) is his Guide, and he is bound to admit nothing contrary to it, but to oppose and reject it. Very right, and so he is; but if every Man shall call his own particular way of thinking and judging by that oracular Name, he will make it the most uncertain fallacious Thing in the World, for it must be as various as the different Complexions, Education, Tempers, and (I had almost said) Features of those that pretend to it. The *Reason* of the meanest Mechanick or Labourer must be as good as that of a Philosopher or Mathematician, and the Lunaticks in *Moorfields* have as good Pretensions to it, as the *Gentlemen of the Royal Society*; for as mad as they are, they think and draw Conclusions, and very often as just, as those that are drawn by great Pretenders to Reason and Philosophy. *Reason* then in this loose indefinite Sense is so far from being a Rule and infallible Standard of Truth, that it is the Source of Error and Confusion. It will therefore be worth while to examine a little into the different Meanings of this obscure equivocal Word, that we may proceed in our Reflexions upon it with less Perplexity, by determining

its precise Signification whenever it occurs in the same or different Senses.

I. The first and most natural Meaning of the Word *Reason* is, *the abstracted Ideal Truth of Things, or the Analogy that runs thro' the whole System of Nature*; by which I mean those certain Proportions, Connexions and Relations, that are betwixt the several Ranks and Orders of Beings and their Ideas, and those Proportions of eternal Truth that arise from compounding and comparing their several Natures, Habitudes, and Relations: And this Ideal Truth, this Analogy of Nature, is the *Ratio*, the Reason, the Nature, the Order, the Truth of Things. We are to consider that the all-wise God, whom *Plato* calls, *The Great Geometrician*, composed the World in Number, Weight, and Measure, with the most exact Harmony, the nicest Symmetry, the most delicate Proportion; every part answering to each other, and to the whole so exactly, that the Correspondence should be perfectly regular, steddy, and uniform; like a well wrought Machine, in which all the Parts are so exquisitely proportioned to each other, that they readily answer the Intention of the Artificer, and the Mechanism of every such Structure is not improperly called its *Ratio*. In this Sense *Tully* speaks of the several Laws of Motion, impressed or implanted in the different Parts of Nature: Thus in his Book *De Natura Deorum*, *L. 2. P. 529. Ed. Gr.* he speaks of the *Astrorum ortus & occasus, atque in omni Aeternitate ratios immutabilesq; cursus*, which *Virgil*, in his *Georgicks*, calls *Leges* and *Aeterna Fædera*, which Nature has imposed

imposed on the several Parts of the vegetable World. And from this *Ratus ordo*, arises the abstracted *Ratio* or Nature of Things. So in all Arithmetical or Algebraic Problems, the Proportion betwixt the several Numbers upon which the Analysis is form'd, is called the *Ratio* of that Problem. In this Sense *Tully* mentions the Word, *T. 2. P. 529 b. Philip.* 11. where speaking of that abstracted Truth of Things, which is the Foundation of universal Justice, Law, and Equity; he says, *Lex est nihil aliud nisi recta a numine Deorum tracta ratio* (viz.) that the Equity of every Law is nothing else but its Agreement with that established Order and Analogy of Nature, which depends upon, and answers to, those Archetypal Ideas and Truths that eternally existed in the divine Mind.

II. A second and more obvious Sense of the Word *Reason* is, that Faculty of the Soul, which we properly call the Understanding, whereby we are enabled to apprehend and judge of this Ideal Truth, or the Relations and Proportions which the several Parts of Nature bear to each other; and this we properly call *Human Reason*, and these answer to each other as the Object and the Faculty. This Ideal Truth is as properly the Object of the Understanding, as Light is of the Eye; and it is not to be doubted, but that the Understanding in its perfect State, in its original Purity, would as easily and naturally apprehend its proper Object, as the Eye rightly disposed would perceive any visible Object at a due Distance, and thro' a due Medium. But as we find by sad Experience, that we want this intuitive Knowledge, that we are so far from being able to

to comprehend the whole System of Truth, the Connexion, the Harmony, and Beauty of *Ideal Reason*, that we can only take it by Parts, and enter into it by slow Degrees: Hence arises

III. A third Sense of the Word *Reason*, by which we mean Argumentation, or that discursive Progression which we are forced to make from one Idea to another, by comparing their different Habitudes and Relations, and inferring one Thing from another, in order to form Propositions and deduce Conclusions, upon the several Subjects which we are endeavouring either to apprehend or explain; and this produces

IV. The fourth and lowest Sense of the Word, by which we understand the Medium or Method of Proof, which we are forced to use in explaining or defending the Truth of any Proposition (*viz.*) When we prove the necessary Relation of two distant Ideas, by shewing the Relation each of them bears to a Third. Thus if we could imagine a Chain of infinite Length, it is plain that a finite Creature could take in no more by his Reason or his Senses, than some few Links of it; but were he to handle or draw one Link, he would quickly perceive that others at an invisible Distance were united to it, and depended on it, by being united to several intermediate Links, which held them together.

V. Hence it appears, that *Reason objectively considered*, is nothing else but the *Truth and Nature* of Things. From whence it follows, that the Apprehension of Things otherwise than they truly are in their own Nature, is not *Reason*, but Error and Mistake, and that he who forms Propositions, and draws

draws Consequences from this erroneous Perception, does not *reason*, but trifles, plays the Fool, talks at Random, disputes in the Dark, like a blind Man reasoning about Colours, or a deaf Man about Sounds, of which, for want of proper Organs, they can have no Idea or Apprehension at all.

VI. Upon the whole, I will venture to give the following Definition of *Reason*, (viz.) *Reason is the just Exercise of the Mind upon clear Ideas.* By Ideas, I mean those Images or Impressions made upon the Mind by external Objects, thro' the Mediation of the Senses, which when duly received must be clear and distinct without Obscurity or Confusion; and the reflex Acts of the Mind whereby she adjusts, compounds and compares these Ideas, and from their different Combinations draws Inferences, makes Deductions, and forms Conclusions, or from thence forms analogical Conceptions of abstracted and spiritual Truths, make up the whole and sole Province of *Reason*. We shall not here enter into the different Classes of Ideas, which some Writers of Note have retailed to their Readers and Admirers with great Ostentation of Learning and Philosophy. Sure we are, that simple Ideas properly deserve that Name, and are the Materials and Groundwork of all our rational Knowledge, and that all compound Ideas arising from the reflex Acts of the Mind, are improperly and falsely so call'd. From these reflex Acts of the Mind upon its own Powers and Operations in receiving, retaining, comparing and compounding these Ideas proceed a Class of Notions and Conceptions of a more spiritual and refined Nature. By removing every Shadow of Imperfection and

and heightening to the utmost Extent of Thought every Perfection we perceive in ourselves or created Nature, we arrive at a certain Ideal Knowledge of God and divine Things, which we apprehend and conceive only by *Analogy*, and express only by *Metaphor*. This Kind of Knowledge, though low and inadequate, will however be found a firm and substantial Basis for all our Enquiries after Truth and Happiness. Mistake me not: I do not mean that we are uncapable of any other Notion of Truth or Enjoyment of any other Happiness than what arises from this *Ideal Knowledge*; all that I mean is this, that this Ideal Knowledge duly attended to, honestly consulted, and faithfully obey'd, will, by a just and necessary Chain of Deductions, bring us to a real and vital Knowledge of *the Truth*, as it is in *Christ Jesus*, who is *Himself the Way, the TRUTH, and the Life*. When these simple Ideas are clear and distinct, a Man has nothing to do but carefully and honestly to consult them, in order to conclude whether any Proposition be true or false. It is not in a Man's Power to stifle the Evidence, or deny the Truth of a Proposition, whose Terms and respective Ideas are clearly and distinctly perceived. To such a Proposition a Man is not at liberty to give or with-hold his Consent, it is not in his Power to doubt whether an *Affirmation* be a *Negation*, whether a *Circle* be a *Triangle*, whether *Light* be *Darkness*. Whence arises this Impossibility of mistaking or confounding these different Things? It arises solely from the clear Impressions made upon the Mind, which when *Reason* consults, it clearly perceives the Idea of a Circle entire different from that of

of a Triangle, and that the Idea of Light is directly opposite to that of Darkness. Let a Wrangler dispute, or a Sceptick pretend to be dissatisfied, and raise Objections ever so captious, ever so cunning; let them reason to the Day of their Death, I defy them ever to have a serious Doubt of the Truth of any Proposition, whose Terms and respective Ideas are clear and distinct. A Man never falls into Error but when he does not carefully and honestly consult these Ideas; if he affirm nothing but what they clearly present to him, and deny nothing but what they clearly exclude, he can never fall into the least Error: He must suspend his Judgment where the Ideas are not clear, but is under an invincible Necessity of surrendring and submitting himself to irresistible Light. And the various Combination of these clear Ideas make up certain Propositions of necessary and eternal Truth, which, plain and simple as they are, are the Pillars of Science, the Basis of all our Ideal Knowledge.

VII. I cannot help observing, upon this Occasion, the perverse Use the *Patrons* of the *Pantheistic Scheme* make of our Reasonings about *Ideal Knowledge*. We assert, that there is a necessary and eternal Difference betwixt Good and Evil; that there is in the Nature of Things an eternal unchangeable Fitness or Unfitness, antecedent to all Laws or positive Appointments whatsoever; and that from these Ideas arise *Propositions of eternal Truth*. Upon which they argue thus: If the Truth of these *Propositions* be eternal and necessary, so must the *Ideas* be also which constitute those Propositions. But *Ideas* are Impressions made upon the

Mind by sensible Objects, and if the *Ideas* are eternal and necessary, the Objects must be so too. From whence they gravely conclude, that by our own Confession, the whole Universe, the $\tauὸ\; Πᾶν$, is that one eternal necessary Being, called *God*. This is one of the most terrible Consequences charged upon the *Platonick Heresy of eternal Ideas*, which the *Pantheists* boast to be unanswerable. To which I shall make this short Reply. *Ideas* are of two Sorts. The first are those which arise in our own Minds, from the Impressions made by sensible Objects, which I shall call *Ectypal*, and which cannot be said to be necessary or eternal, as depending upon external Objects, which are neither necessary nor eternal. The second Sort of *Ideas*, are those which eternally existed in the divine Mind, which are both the efficient and exemplary Cause of this visible created System, which therefore *Philo Cosmop. p. 5.* calls *Ἄρχετυπος πόλις, Κοσμος τεγλίς, Ἀρχετυπον παραδείμα*, by which, and according to which, all Things were made; these therefore I call *Archetypal Ideas*. *Philo* illustrates this by the Similitude of a Man building a City, and the Plan by which he intends to build it: He calls *Νοητὴ Πόλις* an intellectual or archetypal City. These *divine archetypal Ideas* are his essential Wisdom, *Ιδεα τῶν Ιδεῶν, ὁ θεὸς λόγος*, as the same *Philo* speaks, The eternal Source and Spring of intellectual Truth, Beauty, and Order, *in which is no Variableness nor Shadow of turning*. The Truth of these *Ideas*, and by Consequence of the Propositions resulting from them, is eternal and necessary, though there were no created Beings correspondent to those *Ideas*. For Instance;

stance: A *Circle has equal Diameters*, is a Proposition of eternal Truth, it is an actual Truth depending upon no Contingency. For, suppose there should be never such a Thing as a material Circle, which is very possible, for Matter is a created Being, and by Consequence not necessary, and Figure is but a Mode of Matter, it is possible therefore, that a material Circle might never have existed; but what then, is the Proposition ever the less actually true? So indeed it should and must be, if its Truth depended upon the natural Existence of a material Circle. But the Case is otherwise; Truth or the Relation and Connexion of *Ideas*, is the same actual invariable Thing, whether any of these Things do exist materially or not. And it is actually true of the Circle, that it has equal Diameters, whether there be any material Circle or no; which, as it plainly shews that these Propositions are not concerning sensible but intellectual Figure, so it plainly shews, that the Truth of the Proposition does not depend upon the Existence of a material Circle, but upon that *Ideal*, divine, essential Truth, which is pure Act, without Beginning or Ending, without Motion or Alteration, without Flux or Succession, an eternal and unchangeable Reality. I hope my Readers will pardon this Digression; I could not avoid taking Notice of this mighty Argument, in which (if I judge right) their chief Strength seems to lie. Other Things which are casually suggested in their Scheme, are too low and absurd to deserve an Examination. But to return to my Subject.

VIII. That the human Understanding or *Reason*, in its original Perfection, is capable of apprehending and judging of the Truth of Things, is not to be doubted, any more than that the bodily Eye was originally formed and intended for the Perception of Light, and visible Objects. Nor will this, I presume, be denied me by the Men of Reason, who set it up in its present feeble corrupt State, as the supreme infallible Judge of Truth ; so that whatsoever their Reason cannot comprehend, cannot for that Reason be true. Whether the Essences of Things, which are spiritual, and in some Sense eternal, be the proper Object of *human Reason*, I shall not now enquire ; but that at the present the most exalted Pitch of it is low and imperfect, its Views short and limited, its Apprehensions narrow and obscure, is beyond all Dispute certain. Were we to talk of Numbers, Duration, and Space, and many other Subjects in Philosophy, we shall soon perceive, that no finite created Understandings can have *Ideas* adequate to their infinite Natures. We may perhaps apprehend the meaning of the Words, and make a Shift to defend or explain what we mean when we talk of them ; but to comprehend them, to determine or explain their abstracted Natures, is impossible. When we think or talk of Space, we can only conceive a certain, indefinite Extension, and of that too we have no absolute *Idea*, but a bare relative Notion, formed upon the Situation we our selves stand in when we reason or think about it ; and though if we stretch our Imagination ever so far, we may yet conceive Space beyond it, yet where to fix our *né plus ultra* we know not.

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All that we conceive of absolute and eternal Duration, is no more than a certain small Pittance or Portion of it, without any determinate Bounds or Limits. So in Numbers, we cannot compute or calculate so long, or so attentively, but we still find more Numbers behind; which, if I may so express my self, are still capable of infinite Additions. All therefore that we seem to be capable of knowing, is the several Habitudes and Relations that some parts of Duration, Space, and Numbers, bear to each other, upon which we reason, and from whence we draw Conclusions; and yet this Knowledge, as imperfect as it is, is great enough to be the steady Foundation of natural Religion and Morality.

IX. Tho' the Soul has ~~its~~ innate Power of apprehending and judging, yet it does not exert it by a physical or mechanical Necessity. Certain Dispositions are required to prepare and enable it to judge aright of the several Objects and Truths proposed to it. As the bodily Eye, tho' made for the Perception of visible Objects, yet cannot exert that Power if it be disordered by any Obstruction of the optick Nerves, any Suffusion upon the *Retina*, if the Object be placed at an undue Distance, or viewed through a wrong *Medium*; in these Cases the Eye perceives nothing as it really is, its Perception is confused and irregular, and the most beautiful Assemblage of Figures would be nothing but Oddness, Distortion, and Deformity: Just so it is with the Soul, if it be under any Indisposition, any moral or natural Disorder, it apprehends, it judges of nothing aright.

X. The moral Disorders of the Soul, which indispose her for the Search and Apprehension of Truth, are the Lusts of the Flesh, and the Vices and evil Habits of the Soul; by the former, I mean Intemperance, Lewdness, and all other Instances of Debauchery; by the latter, Pride, Ambition, Malice, Covetousness, and such like. That these Vices are in their own Nature Irregularities, or Deviations from the plain Duty of a rational Creature, is I hope too plain to need any Proof, being owned and condemned as such by all the Heathen Writers of Morality. The fatal Effects of the former upon the Minds and Understandings of Men are very obvious, how they corrupt the Blood and Spirits, enfeeble and dry the Brain, weaken and destroy those delicate Fibres that compose the several Organs of Sense, and, in a Word, shock and discompose the whole animal Frame; and so intimate is the Union, so close the Dependence betwixt Soul and Body, that the one cannot but be affected by the Disorders of the other; the active Powers of the Soul seem to languish and decay under the Infirmities of a crazy and distempered Body. A Man may be lewd till he is as much past feeling, as he is past Shame, and may drink till he has in a literal Sense wash'd away his Senses, and drown'd his Understanding. So also the more inward and spiritual Vices of Pride, Ambition, Revenge, Covetousness, and the like, have no less dreadful Influence upon the Soul; they spread a midnight Darkness and Obscurity over all the inward Senses, they cramp and fetter all the Faculties, they pervert the Will, suborn the Judgment, and stupify the Understanding; every Act, every Perception of

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the Soul is tinctured with the prevailing Vice; and a Man under this moral Incapacity can no more discern the Reason of certain Truths, the natural Beauty of certain Virtues, and Deformity of certain Vices, than a Man can discern the Colour, Figure, and Dimensions of certain Bodies, viewed through a wrong Medium, or at too great a Distance.

XI. Having considered the Impediments that hinder Men in the Search of Truth and Exercise of Reason; it is next to be considered, what are the proper Dispositions required in a *Lover of Truth, a Philosopher, a Free-Thinker*. The first and most necessary are Sincerity and Industry. By the former, I mean a hearty Desire to discover and know the Truth, and Resolution to find out and apply all the necessary Means that may conduce towards it. By the latter, I mean, that steady patient Use of Means, that he will not be discouraged by the Difficulties that may occur in his Search; nor through Impatience be tempted to draw hasty and precipitant Conclusions, before the Premisses have been duly and impartially weighed and considered.

XII. Truth is the proper Food of the Understanding, the true Nourishment of a rational Soul; and unless there be a kind of intellectual Hunger and Thirst, an eager Appetite of the Soul, it will either not labour at all, or very faintly and unsuccessfully in pursuit of its Nourishment. That Soul can never discover the Truth, that is a professed Friend and Advocate for Error. Such a one is under an actual Incapacity of perceiving Truth, as he that obstinately shuts his Eyes is of perceiving Light. Every Prejudice, every Attachment to his Interest, his Passions,

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his Vanity, or his Pride, is a Step to a total Eclipse of the Understanding, to a judicial Blindness and Hardness of Heart. The Soul must be in earnest, and sincerely resolve not to be wanting to itself in a due and proper Use of all the necessary Means that God and Nature have pointed out, in order to obtain the end proposed.

XIII. The second Disposition is *Industry*, which will oblige a Man stedily and patiently to pursue the appointed Means. *Truth* is not to be found by the lazy and indolent, she flys from the Sluggard, and will be found only by those who diligently seek her; *who seek for her as for Silver, and search for her as for hid Treasures*. This is the necessary, the only Method of attaining to any particular Art or Science, whether Mathematicks, Philosophy, or Languages. That a Man cannot be taught against his Will is certain, and tho' his Inclination be good, yet if he be either too volatile to fix his Attention, or too lazy and negligent to go thro' the necessary Rudiments and Forms of Instruction, it is morally impossible he should ever make any Progress, much less arrive at any Perfection. A Child that will not, or cannot, be taught his Alphabet, can never be taught the Use of it. A young Well-Wisher to the Mathematicks, that will not first learn the plain Definitions of Points, Lines, Figures, and Dimensions, can never be taught the Use of them; and tho' he should proceed so far, but thro' Laziness and want of Application will proceed no farther, he will be as great a Stranger to Mathematical Learning, as unable to apprehend the Force or Use of a Demonstration, as he that hath never known any Thing of the Matter.

XIV. Let us now suppose one of these superficial Smatterers, who has just Learning enough to distinguish a Point from a Line, a Circle from a Triangle; let us suppose such a one hearing some of the great Genius's of the last or present Age talking over the stupendous Discoveries they have made in the Secrets of Nature: This would be all Jargon, (or, if you please, *Mystery*) to him. Let us suppose him to have a much better Estate than all of them together, and a handsomer Face than any of them; allow him to be a Youth of Fire and Vivacity, a ready Speaker, full of Wit and Repartee, a Favourite of all the merry Fellows, the Darling of the Ladies, and, in a Word, *a very pretty Gentleman*. Upon the Merit of all these Accomplishments, let us suppose him with a polite Sneer, despising them as a Pack of queer out-of-the-way Mortals, and magisterially declaring, that all they have been saying is nothing but downright Jargon and mystical Nonsense; should they gravely reply to him, that they can demonstrate every Thing they have said to be true, and vouchsafe to give him a Demonstration of any one Thing he has been pleased to call in Question, the Force of which he, for want of Genius or Learning, cannot apprehend: He has nothing farther to say, but that it is against his *Reason*, that his *Reason*, which is as good as theirs, tells him the contrary; that his *Reason* is to be his Guide, and that no Man's Authority shall persuade him to believe any Thing contrary to it; that he has as good a Right to judge for himself as they have, and that he will never pin his Faith upon their Sleeves, (according to the Cant of our *Free-thinkers.*) As for them,

they may possibly thro' Prejudice of Education believe what they say to be true, or else for some By-ends of their own, to procure and enjoy some good Salaries annexed to Professorships, or to maintain a fancied Superiority over their Betters, they may impose upon them, what they do not believe themselves. What Treatment, can we imagine, such a Pretender to *Reason and Freedom of Thought* would deserve? Surely not to be seriously dealt with, but to be considered as a Child or an Ideot, and treated accordingly, with Pity and Contempt.

Axioms XV. As ridiculous and unreasonable as this Supposition may appear, yet it is exactly parallel to the Bulk of those among us, who profess themselves the only *Patrons of Reason*, and affect to distinguish themselves from the rest of Mankind, as a Herd of *Priest-ridden Bigots*, by the Style and Title of *Free-thinkers in Religion*: Which considered as a Science or the Knowledge of divine Truth, must be learn'd by the same Method, the same Progression from Definitions to first Principles or Actions, and thence to Conclusions, as other Sciences are. The same sincere Desire to be taught, the same Freedom from Prejudices, the same Industry and Application, the same Ingenuity of Temper, and Readiness to receive and submit to proper Evidence, are required to apprehend and judge of divine Truths, as of those in Mathematicks and Philosophy. He, therefore, who pretends to judge and determine upon these Matters, without these necessary Dispositions, may be ever learning, and never come to the Knowledge of the Truth. An immoral, a proud, an ambitious, a stupid, or a lazy Man, cannot possibly be a *Free-thinker*,

thinker, tho' some, with all these Impediments, lay Claim to the Title. To think *freely* is to think *impartially*, without Prejudice or Prepossession ; to apprehend clearly simple *Ideas*, and first Principles ; to compound, divide, and compare them in their clearest Light ; to be free from every Appetite, Inclination, or Engagement, that may pervert the Understanding, or corrupt the Will, which in pursuit of Truth, spare no Pains, stick at no Difficulties, indulge no vicious Habit either of Soul or Body, that may retard or obstruct them in the pursuit of Truth. They pay a just and even scrupulous Regard to every Thing that can be alledged, fairly and candidly examine every Authority that can be produced, and every Thing that bears the Appearance of Argument on either Side of the Question ; and then determine according to the best and clearest Evidence. *To think freely* is not to think at random ; to think as we please, in defiance of *Reason and common Sense*, it is not a liberty of contradicting and opposing the Sentiments of wise and good Men in all Ages, and the *reasonable Authority* of our Superiors in Church and State ; but it is to think soberly and modestly, and to be just to those Convictions which either the Light of Nature or Revelation can give to a serious and impartial Enquirer. But the lewd, the vicious, the lazy and ambitious, in short, every obstinate Sinner is incapable of thinking freely, *he that committeth Sin, is the Servant or Slave of Sin.* And so great a Slave is he, that not only the Scriptures, but even common Sense and daily Experience assure us, that both his Soul and Body are in Subjection to the Captivity and Law of Sin. St. Paul in his 2 Ep.

to *Timothy*, ii. 26. speaks of such a one, *as led Captive by the Devil at his Will*, by the Power and Influence that he has over his corrupt Heart, unruly Passions, and blind Reason; and *Romans*, vi. the Apostle in great Variety of Expressions, aggravates the Greatness and Misery of this Servitude, §. 12. *Let not Sin reign in your mortal Body, that ye should obey it in the Lusts thereof*, §. 13. *Neither yield ye your Members as Instruments of Unrighteousness unto Sin*, §. 16. *Know ye not that to whom ye yield your selves Servants to obey, his Servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of Sin unto Death*, &c. §. 19. *As ye have yielded your Members Servants to Uncleanliness, and to Iniquity unto Iniquity*, &c. All serving to express that Weakness, Ignorance, and Infirmitiy, that Inability to do good, and that violent Propension to do Evil, that is entailed by Sin on all the Sons and Daughters of Corruption. And when the whole Man is a Slave, when all the Faculties of Soul and Body are in Subjection to the Law of Sin, how can such a Man be supposed to think or act freely (*viz.*) impartially, honestly, and righteously? No: He is, at least, spiritually blind, incapable of perceiving the Light and Evidence of those Truths which bear Testimony against his Vices and Follies; so that the Man whose Heart is wedded to his Lusts, who is attached to some darling Sin, who is fond of some gainful Error, which he is unwilling to have detected and exposed, has bribed his Judgment before-hand, not to believe any Evidence that makes against him. Like a corrupt Judge, or a partial Jury, they determine before they hear the Merits of the Cause, *etiam si persuadebis, non tamen persuaderis.*

suaseris. They resolve never to believe any Doctrine to be true which they could wish to be false.

XVI. Here we have a young Libertine entred early into the fashionable Vices of the Age, to which he entirely devotes his Hours of Leisure and Pleasure; he has, perhaps, an Ambition to shine in a Court, or to make a considerable Figure in a Party, is bent upon raising his Fortune, and acquiring Posts and Titles of Honour; or, if he has not this Ambition, he is perhaps fond of the Beau Monde, has his Heart set upon the Vanity of Dress, Gallantry, and Equipage, delights in Intrigue, and piques himself upon being well with the Ladies and Men of Pleasure. A Man under these Engagements, and Circumstances of Life, can find no Leisure to enter into abstracted Notions, that require much Thought, give him many Pangs, and interrupt the professed Business of his Life. But because Atheism has an ungenteel, unfashionable Sound, and his Conscience, when ever it is consulted, tells him, there must be something in that Word Religion, which the World has been so long disputing about; he therefore, takes up some few undeniable first Principles, which he finds are not to be disputed, and from them draws a few undigested Consequences of his own, and forms a little System of Truth as he calls it, that may neither disturb his Pleasures, nor interfere with his Interest, which he defends by little sophistical Arts of Wrangling, which he and his Brethren call reasoning. Should he, by chance, under the Qualms of a Debauch, a Fit of the Spleen, some little Mortifications of Sickness, Losses, or Disappointments, for want of Company, or something to do, give himself

himself leave to read in that old Book the Bible, there he finds certain four Precepts, that forbid him the irregular Gratifications of some warm Appetites he has about him, the pursuit of several Objects which he has in view; there he finds strange Stories of a future Judgment, a World to come, an Eternity of Happiness and Misery, as the Reward and Punishment of certain Things done in the Flesh. These startle him and disturb his Quiet, he fears the Event, but hopes it may not be true; with this View he reads, to find if he can discover in this Book any Marks of Falsehood, any Thing that looks incredible, that is inconsistent with his *Reason*. And when he finds Accounts of certain Miracles, that surpass his Understanding, and puzzle his *Reason*, and certain Truths required to be believed, which he can see no *Reason* for, he immediately concludes, without more ado, that this is all Cheat and Imposture; and since both the Precepts and Doctrines are all in the same Book, he concludes they must be all of the same Stamp, and therefore rejects the whole, recovers his former Tranquillity, and from thenceforth commences *Free-thinker*; like my young Mathematician, who, before he had gone thro' the first Book of *Euclid*, should meet with Bishop *Wilkins's Mathematical Magick*, in which he should find several amazing Things, which vastly surpass his Understanding, and seem contrary to what he calls his *Reason*; he therefore stops short, throws away his Book, pronounces all to be Nonsense and Absurdity, and that the Professors are a Pack of Cheats combined together, to abuse honest Gentlemen, and to make them renounce their *Reason*; which, as a true

British

British Protestant, he resolves to maintain, and assert the Right of his private Judgment, against all arbitrary and tyrannical Impositions whatsoever.

XVII. And here I appeal to these Patrons of Reason and Free-thinking, I desire them to knock at their Consciences, if they are not past feeling, and ask them ingenuously, whether this be not their Case; whether the true Reason of their profess'd Opposition to Religion, be not (what Mr. *Hobbs* long ago confess'd) because Religion is against them, else how comes it to pass, that all their Scepticism and Criticism are employed only against the holy Scriptures, and the Truths of Religion; why is all their Zeal bent to oppose the divine Authority of the one, and destroy or extenuate the Obligations of the other? Why do not *Moses* and the Prophets meet with as equitable Treatment as the Gentile Poets and Historians? Why are not the Doctrines of the Gospel, the Writings of the Evangelists, Apostles, Saints, Martyrs, and Confessors, as candidly read and considered, as the Morals of *Epictetus*, *Plutarch*, or *Seneca*? Why have we no free-thinking Reformers in Law, Physick, Arithmetick, or Navigation? Do these Gentlemen ever retire from the Hurry of Business or Diversion, and think seriously of those Truths which they oppose? Do they ever take half the Pains to examine the Grounds of any one Principle in Religion, as to understand their several Professions, to make their Fortunes, or to manage an Intrigue? Is not their whole Time divided betwixt their Business and their Pleasure, or rather is not Pleasure the great Business of their Lives? How else comes it to pass, that several very pretty Gentlemen

men take upon them to ridicule the Scriptures, who are not able to read a Chapter in them, and to charge them with Contradictions, without being able to explain or spell that very hard Word; who yet can talk of Busines of the World, Politicks, Campaigns, military Discipline, Dress, Masquerades, the Park, the Playhouse, and the Drawing-Room? These are not the Diversions, but the whole Busines, the Employment of most of the gay Youth about this Town, who take some part of *Solomon's Advice*: They rejoice in their Youth, and let their Hearts chear them in the Days of their Youth; they walk in the Ways of their Heart, and in the Sight of their Eyes, but they consider not, that for all these Things God will bring them into Judgment, neither indeed is God in all their Thoughts.

XVIII. These are the merry Fellows, the agreeable Rakes whose Hearts are so corrupted, and Heads so distracted, with a constant Succession of new Pleasures, and fresh Scenes of Gallantry, that they are almost under an actual Incapacity of thinking at all, and may not improperly be called *the unthinking Free-Thinkers*; for as they have no Ideas or Principles of their own, they are free to think any Thing that their Directors tell them. A Story ever so improbable, a Joke ever so stupid, a Scheme ever so irrational, that may seem to affect the Truth and Credit of Religion, charms them beyond Measure; they believe it without Examination, propagate it without Fear or Shame, and can hear it confuted without Conviction or Confusion. Men of this Make, consider the Gratification of their Lusts and Passions as their supreme Felicity, and whatever opposes

poses it as their greatest Misery. No wonder then they rise up as one Man to oppose a Religion that checks them in their vicious Career, and bears Testimony against all their Deeds of Darkness. For to say the Truth, their Infidelity is not owing to any Difficulty or Obscurity in the true Nature of Things, but proceeds entirely from the Corruption of their Hearts, the Violence of their Lusts, and their monstrous indolent Way of enquiring after their true and real Happiness. What Attainments in Knowledge and Virtue might they not arrive at, if they were honest, humble, teachable, and diligent? Do we not observe with what Ease little Children make themselves Masters of Languages, and apprehend the use of all the Terms applied in common Life? How soon do People of slow Parts and mean Capacities, make themselves Masters of mechanick Arts, and all the *Fineſſe* and Delicacy of Manufacture? How ingenious are they themselves to their own Destruction? How deep in their Schemes, how refined in their Counsels, how dextrous in their Management, how subtle and bold in their Execution of any Design to gratify a darling Lust, to suppress the Evidence of Truth, or crush the Man whom they fear or hate? They never want Genius, Parts, or Address, but in the Affairs of Virtue and Religion. Would they apply themselves as earnestly and diligently to the Search of Truth, as they do to manage an Intrigue, raise a fine Fortune, procure a good Post or a shining Title, all Difficulties would vanish at once, all would be plain, easy, rational, and delightful; but their Application is quite the wrong Way, their whole Endeavour to impose

upon themselves, and stifle as much as possible the Evidence of Truth, and the Checks of natural Conscience; and when once they have got rid of this troublesome Adversary, and silenced this impertinent Monitor, they then break loose from every virtuous Restraint, and rush into every Scene of Lust and Lewdness like a Horse into the Battle; they waste their Strength and their Substance among Harlots, Sots, and Gamesters, without Blushing and without Reflection, *till they mourn at the last when their Flesh and their Body are consumed*, Prov. v. 11. Multitudes of these ancient young Gentlemen are to be seen about this great Town, who are dragging a loathsome rotten Carcass to the Grave, at an Age when their gallant and virtuous Ancestors were forming themselves by the necessary Arts of Peace and War, to be the Ornaments and Defenders of their own Country, or the Conquerors of others, and purchasing by their Learning or their Virtues, Estates and Titles, to be a Reproach and Curse to their degenerate Offspring. As *Reason* is not the Talent of these Gentlemen, they are happily reliev'd from the Trouble of thinking, by a new Expedient started by a late noble Writer, (*Vid. Letter concerning Enthusiasm*) *that the best Way to abolish Christianity was to try it by the Test of Ridicule*. And here indeed, they are of excellent Use to their Leaders: For if a Man cannot talk Sense himself, he may have Wit enough to laugh at those that do; and if the Majority of the Company, happen to be of his Side, he gets the Laugh, and by Consequence, the best of the Argument.

XIX. Ay, but say they, we have among us, Men of Gravity and Morality, Sobriety and Temperance; Men that have out-liv'd the Violence of their youthful Passions, who therefore have Leisure to think calmly and rationally of these Matters, and who talk soberly and deliberately; not in the Heat of Passion, or over a Bottle, but over a grave Pipe and a Dish of Coffee. This is very true, and I my self have the Honour to be acquainted with a whole Clan of them, who meet regularly at certain Seasons, for the Propagation of Infidelity and Freedom of Thought; and as good a Reason may be given for their Ignorance in Religion, as in Opticks or Navigation; in short, they never learnt it, nor ever thought seriously about it. Many of them, 'tis true, are sober Men, for they dare not be otherwise; most of them have contracted some genteel Infirmities from the Sins of their Youth, which keep them in some Sort of Decency; they have heard, and know not but it may be true, that there is a Judgment to come, and an eternal Life of Happiness and Misery after this, and knowing that their Health depends upon their Regularity, they are very careful to keep on this Side the Grave, not knowing what may be on the other: And the Result of my Observations upon these and some other odd Characters that have fallen in my Way, is this, that I never yet met with an old Unbeliever, who was not also an old Sinner. Men of this Make, who have all their Lives long been Slaves to their Follies and Vices, which they still love as well as ever, if they had but Abilities to gratify them; who when the Heat of Concupiscence is abated, and

they are not diverted from thinking gravely by the Midnight Bottle and Song, as in the Days of their Youth; who go early and soberly to Bed, and have many waking Hours in the Silence and Quiet of Night, fit for Thought and Recollection; if in these Circumstances they cannot see the Charms of Virtue, and Deformity of Vice, how agreeable the Practice of every Virtue is, to our coolest and most deliberate Thoughts; how irreconcileable to our Reason, our Interest and our Peace, how unjustifiable in the Act, how dreadful in its Consequences is the Practice of every Vice; Men who in these Circumstances discern not the least Glimmering of the Beauty of Holiness, nor tremble at the Guilt and Consequences of Sin, must needs be (as the Apostle expresses it, 2 Pet. i. 9.) *blind and cannot see afar off, and have forgot that they were purged from their old Sins*, or (as the Original will better bear) have quite forgot their baptismal Covenant, by which they were purged from their old Sins; they are spiritually blind, their Understandings are darkened, they are dead to all Impressions of moral Reason, or moral Virtue, and the Employments of their Minds must needs be very just, and their Ideas very clear and distinct, who, in the Language of the Prophet, Es. v. 20. *Call Evil good, and Good evil, who put Darkness for Light, and Light for Darkness, who put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter.* How can a Man think otherwise, that has ever been a Witness to their Conversation? What can be a greater Satyr upon human Nature, a greater Banter upon Reason, clear Ideas and cool Reflections? What severer Reflection can there be upon modern *Free-thinking*, than to hear a Club

a Club of old, dry, joyless Sinners comforting and supporting themselves under the Infirmities of old Age, Twinges from old Sins and Sufferings, and the certain Approach of Death, with the glorious Hopes of Annihilation, of sinking with their Kindred Brutes into nothing, placing their whole Comfort in that Thought which is of all others most terrible and dreadful to humane Nature, renouncing all that Consolation, all that noble, that rational, that exalted Joy which arises in a sober, righteous Mind, from a Hope full of Immortality, of being rescued from the Sins and Miseries of this Life, and restored to the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God.

XX. But supposing that there are some amongst them, whose Prejudices are not so deeply rooted, who have Capacity and Ingenuity enough to receive Instruction, and enter fairly into a Thread of impartial Reasoning. I shall therefore, in the next Place, endeavour to shew, that there is nothing in Religion, either Natural or Revealed, contrary to Reason, nothing that contradicts the Nature and Truth of Things. As for the chief Heads of natural Religion; such as the Existence of a God, the Immortality of the Soul and a future State; I do not remember ever to have heard them openly oppos'd upon the Foot of Reason, tho' sometimes slyly banter'd, by Men who if they had imagined, that any Thing that had the Face of Reason, could have been urged against them, would not have failed to have done it; I shall therefore take them for granted, till I hear they are disputed. The necessary Duties of Obedience, Purity, Prayer, &c. due to a Being of Infinite Goodness and Perfection, which

which are implied in the natural *Idea* we have of God, follow by plain and undeniable Consequence. The Duties of Humanity, Justice, and Mercy to one another, as Creatures of the same God, and Partakers of the same common Nature, cannot be denied to be entirely agreeable and consistent with *common Reason*. Whence the ancient Moralists of the heathen World, *Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Tully, &c.* first discovered them, and taught them as the necessary Result of *Right Reason*. But the Difficulty that puzzles them most, is the Business of Revealed Religion. Before I enter upon this Part of the Question, I beg leave to lay down these few *Postulata*, which I have already supposed will be granted without farther Proof, by every impartial *Reasoner*, and *Free-Thinker*, (as for the Patrons of the *Pantheistick Scheme*, they are at present out of the Question.)

1. That there is a God.
2. That this God is a Being of infinite Goodness, Wisdom, and Power.
3. That this God made all Things.
4. That Man was created Immortal.

If these *Postulata* be not contrary to *Reason*, or the Nature of Things, as I am sure it is demonstrable they are not; I shall from thence undertake to prove, as briefly as possible, that there is nothing in the Books of the Old and New Testament contrary to *Reason*, i. e. in plainer Words, there is nothing in them that contradicts the common and obvious Notions of Truth; that there is no Absurdity, like

like what we in other Cases agree to call a Contradiction; such as, that the Part is greater than the whole; that the same Proposition, in the same Sense, and in the same Respect, can be true and false at the same Time; that two and three are not equal to five, and such like.

XXI If God be a Being of infinite Goodness, and created Man to live for ever, he certainly designed him to be happy for ever; for to create him for eternal Misery would be inconsistent with infinite Goodness. This Happiness must be the Result and Reward of Obedience, because the Happiness of a Creature must depend upon the Favour and Protection of its first Cause. If the Happiness of a Creature, depend upon the Favour of its Creator, it is highly reasonable, that it should know the Will of its Creator, and the Terms of Obedience required of it, that it might know how to serve him, and obey him as it ought to do; and by consequence, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he would, being infinitely Good, and that he could, being infinitely Wise and Powerful, reveal his Will to them, by some Means or other, that they might know it and do it; and that what he would do, and could do, he certainly has done, is highly agreeable to *Reason*, that they may be without Excuse, who are punished for their Disobedience. That the Books which we call the Holy Scripture, are that Will of God revealed to Mankind, is not contrary to *Reason*, because there is nothing in the Books themselves that contradicts *Reason*. I do not here pretend to enter into the positive Proofs of the Excellency and Divinity of those Holy Books, which

has been admirably and justly done by many able Writers, both ancient and modern; nor to explain by Reason the several sublime Truths comprehended in them, that is not my present Design; I am only to shew these Men of *Reason*, that ~~they~~ are not affected by their Prejudices against them, that there are none of these Absurdities and Contradictions to be found there, which they weakly and wickedly imagine, and when they are once convinced of this, the Way will be clear to demonstrate the positive Excellency of those Holy Books, and their Preference, not only to the Light of Nature, but to all other pretended Revelations or Doctrines whatsoever.

XXII. To evince this, I shall consider the Holy Scripture :

1. With regard to its History.
2. Its Miracles.
3. Its Precepts.
4. Its Mysteries.

1. The first Difficulty that occurs in the History of Scripture, is, that of the Creation and Fall of Man. And in this there appears nothing contrary to *Reason*. That a God of infinite Power should create a Being in his own Image to partake of all his communicable Attributes and Perfections, is so far from being contrary to *Reason*, that it would be a Contradiction to assert the contrary: For that would be to suppose his Power infinite, and limited at the same time. Besides, since there are such Creatures in the World, whence had they their Beginning, but from the creating Power of the Almighty?

To

To say that they created themselves, would be contrary to *Reason*; for the same Being cannot be the Cause and Effect of it self: And to say that they existed from all Eternity, would be to make them Gods, and not Creatures. But then we are told, that Man was created much more happy and perfect, than we see him at present, and that by his Transgression of the Commands of his Maker, he forfeited and lost this Happiness for himself and his Posterity; and pray what is there in this contrary to *Reason*? For it is not my present Business to account for the *Reason* of it, or reconcile it to *Reason*, that is another Province. Is it any Contradiction to suppose that God could make a Creature, and endue him with Freedom of Will, and put him into a happy State of Probation, which he might secure to himself and his Posterity, by his Obedience, or forfeit by the Abuse of his Liberty? Is not Dependence included in the very Idea of a Creature? Does not Dependence of any Creature, in its natural State, suppose Infirmity, Mutability, or a Possibility of falling or changing? Surely there is no Absurdity in this; but to assert the contrary, is a direct Contradiction in Terms. But say they, *Adam* not only forfeited for himself, but for all his Posterity. The Children that were yet unborn are punished, though guiltless, for the Transgressions of their first Parents; which seems highly unjust and unreasonable. To this it may be answered, that without all question, *Adam* knew the Consequence of his Transgression, that it would affect his Posterity, whose relation to him, is perhaps deeper and more intimate, than the common Philosophy concerning the Origin of

Souls, is apt to suppose: Why therefore is it more absurd to suppose, that a Parent who knows that the Happiness of his Posterity, as well as his own, depends upon certain Terms of Obedience, should, by violating those Laws involve himself and them in Condemnation, than that an extravagant Father, by carelessly spending a good Estate, may leave his Children Beggars, or that by breaking and debauching a good Constitution, by Lewdness and Intemperance, he may so weaken the *Stamina vitæ*, and corrupt the seminal Principles, as to entail an Hereditary *Lues* upon his latest Posterity? In short, so intimate is the Relation, so close the Dependence between us and our first Parents, that in the natural Course and Order of Things, (without supposing any judicial Guilt imputed to us by God) it is no more unreasonable to suppose, that the Posterity of *Adam* should be infected by his Fall, than that a sour Fountain should send forth sour Waters; or that a Crab-Tree should produce sour Fruit; *for who can bring a clean Thing out of Unclean?*

XXIII. And that this is the Case of all the Sons of *Adam*, that they are at present in a fallen, corrupt State, that all the Faculties and Powers of their Souls and Bodies are enfeebled, and sunk below the original Perfection, in which their first Parent was created, and for which they were designed, is more than probable, if we consider the Relation to their Creator, God blessed for evermore, infinitely Wise, Just, and Good: Who could have no other Inducement to create Man, but the overflowing of his infinite Goodness; who therefore, doubtless, created him in such Perfection, and with such

such Abilities, that nothing but his own Fault could make him miserable. Can we conceive, that a Creature could come out of the Hands of an infinitely Powerful, Wise, and good Creator, so miserable, so helpless, so ignorant as we see him at present? The Free-Thinkers in the heathen World thought otherwise, who though they had no explicit Notion of such a Lapse, as the Holy Scriptures mention, yet concluded we were in a preternatural imperfect State, and asserted the Necessity of divine Assistance, to bring us to that Pitch of Wisdom, Virtue, and Happiness, which is the proper Perfection of our Natures. And can we imagine, that he who made us, gave us not that proper Perfection, and all the Helps and Assurances, that were necessary to secure and preserve it; except Immutability, which is contradictory to the Idea of a Creature? That he should be left at Liberty to chuse the Good, and refuse the Evil, seems highly agreeable to *Reason*, that his Obedience might be more rational, and his Service more meritorious. *Plato* in his *Alcibiades* talks so feelingly of human Ignorance and Infirmities, and of the Necessity of a Director from Heaven, to teach us the true Nature of Prayer and Devotion; that some learned Men have concluded he thereby bore Testimony to the Fall of Man, and the Necessity of a Saviour to restore him. From this Notion came all their moral Philosophy, which was intended to improve and perfect their Nature; hence all their Laws about Civil Government, and all their other Arts of Politeness or Necessity, were ascribed to some divine Powers, who enlightened human Ignorance, and

strengthened their Infirmitieſ. Thus *Numa* had his *Egeria*, *Lycurgus* his divine Director, and *Socrates* his *Dæmon*, and all the Poets their reſpective Deities, who at once inspired and governed the Poetick Flame; by all this confeſſing the Impotence and Ignorance of human Nature, and the Neceſſity of having Recourſe to ſome ſuperior Light to guide us into the Way of Truth, and ſome greater Power than our own, to enable us to follow its Direction. Not to ſay that the Doctrine of the Pre-exiſtence of Souls, which was that of the *Pythagorick* and *Platonick* Schools, as well as the *Chaldaick* and *Ægyptian*, from whence theirs was de-rived, is in Effect the very fame Doctrine which the Holy Scripture has more plainly taught.

XXIV. But here I am arrested by an Objection that is intended to demolish the whole Scheme. The Freedom of Man's Will, upon which ſo many ſad Consequences are charged, is all a Jefte, God (ſay they) would neither have been good nor wiſe, if he had given Man a Freedom of Will; that is to ſay, a Power of finning, of disappointing the End of his Creation, and the Intention of the divine Will, and making himſelf eternally miserable. We impoſe upon our ſelves (ſay they) when we fancy our ſelves at liberty to chufe the Good, and refuſe the Evil; this ridiculous vain Illuſion, (ſay they) proceſſes from a Notion that the Will of Man can-not be forced or constrained in its Act of Volition. It cannot indeed be determined, but by its Pleaſure, and among diſferent Pleaſures or Enjoymenſ, it is neceſſarily, and invincibly determined by that which appears the beſt and greateſt, and it never can de-termini

termine otherwise. *A Man may imagine he chuses, and acts freely in every Operation of Soul or Body, whilst he is as well by the internal Disposition of his Organs, as by the Circumstances and Influence of external Objects, as mechanically determined, as the Motions of a Clock or a Watch, or any other Piece of Machinery, are in Proportion to its Weights and Springs.* There is, I believe, scarce any Absurdity in Nature that has not one Time or other had its Patrons and Advocates, else one would think it impossible that any Man of Sense should seriously talk at this Rate. The Freedom of Man's Will is one of those self-evident Truths, that it is not in any Man's Power to doubt whether he has it or no. A Man may dispute warmly and cunningly against the plainest Truths, whilst he confutes himself by this Method of disputing, and confesses an hundred Times over, in the Course of his Argument, the very Truth he is endeavouring to oppose. Every Man of common Sense that enters into himself, and observes the Motions of his own Soul and Body, finds within himself an irresistible Conviction of this Truth. The clear Idea we have of this *Liberty*, represents us to our selves and others as unreasonable and culpable when we have committed a Crime, which we are conscious to our selves we might have avoided; when we blush and take Shame to our selves for Actions committed by our own free Choice, without being irresistibly determined by any other Cause distinct from our own Will. We have no need to amuse our selves or our Readers with any Philosophical Enquiries, in order to illustrate and confirm this Truth. It is the Voice of Nature, it is

is an indelible Impression upon our Hearts, it is clear as the Light at Noon-Day, it is a Truth upon which the Institution and Discipline of our whole Life, from the Cottage to the Throne, from the Cradle to the Grave, is entirely founded. Take away the *Freedom of Man's Will*, you at once destroy the very Notions of Virtue and Vice, Rewards and Punishments, Laws and Law-givers human and divine. A Consequence which they are so far from fearing or disowning, that they profess it, and triumph in it, and assert and vindicate the absurd Principle, purely for the Sake of the absurd Consequence.

XXV. A Wrangler may warm his Imagination, and impose upon himself, he may at last come to fancy that he doubts in good earnest, and with a good Inclination, and a little Sophistry, may puzzle the plainest Cause; but in the common Practice and Business of Life, we suppose it as an undoubted first Principle, as much as we do that we have Legs and Arms liable to be broken, burnt or scalded, Heads that are not Pistol Proof, and Skulls that be they ever so thick, are yet not impenetrable, and therefore we wisely contrive and labour to preserve them from Mischief, by keeping out of Harm's Way. Reason as long as you will upon these clear Ideas, you must either follow them without fear of being deceived, or fall into direct Scepticism. It is needless to sit down and consider whether you shall follow them or no, their Evidence is irresistible, and you are (I had almost said) mechanically determined to act agreeably to them. But what signifies disputing? Suppose one of these Gentlemen should for his Sins be condemned to spend the Dregs of Life,

Life, (a Supposition not at all impossible) with a termagant Coquette, who may pay him in his own Coin ; suppose his Children should be disobedient ; his Friends forsake or betray him ; his Servants and Tenants cheat and abuse him ; Think you he would be so much a Philosopher as not to complain ? That would be the least that could be expected from him ; ten to one but he would be so unreasonable, as to imagine that the Laws of the Land might in such Cases prescribe certain seasonable and wholesome Severities. If he should apply to me as a Magistrate, to desire Justice upon the Offenders ; I should reply to him, Sir, Pray be easy and keep your Temper, you have no Injustice done you, the poor Creatures could not help it, they were not at liberty to act otherwise ; they were irresistibly determined to do as they have done, as much as a Stone is to fall to the Ground, when you let it out of your Hand ; 'tis the Excuse you have made for your own Sins a thousand Times over, and I hope you will allow it to have just Weight, when pleaded for the Follies and Frailties of others. Can any Body imagine that such an Answer would pacify him, or that it would not rather inflame his Passion to hear himself thus gravely bantered ? Would he (think you) immediately forget and forgive the Frailties of his Bedfellow, the Treachery of his Friends, and the Injustice of his Servants ? I fancy, not. What an odd Sort of a Philosopher then must he be, who denies in the Schools that *Liberty of Will*, which he supposes as a first Principle of all his Dealings with Mankind in common Life, and will be as passionate and implacable to those who have

have wronged or displeased him, as if he had all his Life-time been on the other Side of the Question? Further, suppose one of these Philosophical Gentlemen should fall under the Censures of the Publick, whether of the House of Commons, or the Tea-Table, should he in one Place be arraigned for Bribery, Corruption, or Extortion, or at the other for an ungenerous, or an unmannerly Action, it would be a very entertaining Apology to hear him plead his want of Power to do otherwise. Had an Advocate for the late *South-Sea* Directors had the Confidence to tell that Honourable House, that it was indeed true, that those Gentlemen had pick'd up pretty little Fortunes out of the Ruins of their Country, but that it ought by no means to be charged upon them as a Crime, for that it was impossible for them to do otherwise; that they all to a Man knew and confessed, that there was an irresistible Charm in publick Money, and that they themselves could not have avoided doing the same Thing, if they had had the good Fortune to be in the same Circumstances; such an Apology would be so far from helping his Cause, or softening his Judges, that it would be deemed as great an Insult upon the Reason and common Sense, as upon the Honour and Integrity of that illustrious Assembly.

XXVI. In short, take away the Liberty of human Actions, and you turn the World upside down, and destroy every Trace or Footstep of Order, Justice and Truth; if Men are invincibly determined to act as they do, they are no more accountable for their Actions, than the Spring of a Watch is for the Movement which the Artist has given it: All

Distin-

Distinctions of Virtue and Vice, Merit and Demerit, Honour and Infamy, are at an End; Rewards are ridiculous, Corrections are unreasonable, and Punishments barbarous and tyrannical; every one acts right, because he cannot do otherwise; every Thing is right and in good order, because it is impossible to be otherwise. Now what can be more surprizing than that Men should obstinately contradict their own *clear Ideas*, the Voice of Nature and *Reason*, to defend and maintain a monstrous Position, to which we give the Lie in our Practice every Hour of our Life; to establish a Doctrine that overturns all Order and Government, that confounds Vice and Virtue, that authorizes the most shocking and unnatural Iniquities, the natural Sense of Modesty and Decency, and sinks and debases Mankind *even below the Beasts* that perish? But this they do to reconcile their Sins to their Reason, to shake off the Yoke of Religion, to stifle the Remorse of Conscience, by persuading themselves that they have no Power to prefer Virtue to Vice, if there be indeed any such Thing. Nothing but the Excess of Lust or Passion could push a Man on to so violent an Outrage against his own Reason, and yet this monstrous Excess is of it self enough to cure any Man that is not absolutely incurable; it should teach him to distrust his own corrupt Heart, and to suspect what he calls his *Reason*, when he perceives to what Absurdities they reduce him to make him easy in his Sins, that they force him to contradict himself, and to deny in Words that Freedom of Will, and Liberty of Action, which he finds interwoven in his very Thread of Life, and which

it is not in his Power seriously to doubt of. A Doctrine so absurd in it self, so fatal in its Consequences to the Interests and Peace of Mankind, deserves (as *Tully* somewhere says of the *Epicurean Philosophy*) *not the Examination of the Schools, but the Correction of the Magistrate.*

XXVII. The next Difficulty in Scripture History, is *Noah's Flood*. Here they cavil again, and cannot reconcile to their Reason, that immense Quantity of Waters that covered the Face of the Earth, nor imagine whence they came: But what is this to the Purpose? There is no Absurdity, no Contradiction to suppose, that he who made the World, and commands all the Powers of Nature, could from many secret and unknown Reservoirs, bring Water enough to destroy a disobedient People. As for the other Parts of Holy Story, the Destruction of *Sodom*, the Adventures of the Patriarchs, the giving of the Law, the History of the Judges and Kings of *Israel* and *Judah*, the several Captivities and Restorations of the *Jews*; they stand upon the same Foot of Evidence and Credibility that any prophane History does. The Expeditions of *Xerxes*, *Alexander* and *Julius Cæsar*, are as incredible as any of these. But as I am very sensible their Spleen is not so much directed against the Series of historical Facts, as against the wonderful and miraculous Circumstances that are intermixt with them; I shall therefore proceed,

XXVIII. 2. To the Miracles recorded in Holy Scripture; these being only Circumstances of certain Facts recorded and well attested, must have the same Degree of Credibility with the Facts themselves.

selves. That the Facts are as well attested as any Part of prophane Story, will (I presume) not be questioned by any one, who has read and consider'd Mr. *Lesly's Short Method with the Deists*. And why the Circumstances should be disputed as incredible and unreasonable, I cannot see. In short, let our Adversaries produce one miraculous Story in Scripture, that contradicts the Nature of Things, or that Omnipotence cannot produce; and we will then undertake a particular Proof of it. Nor can this be thought evading the Question; for when they ask, how can these Things be? How are these wonderful and supernatural Effects to be accounted for? I freely answer, I cannot tell: We know not the several Springs and Powers, even of created Nature; we are unacquainted with the distinct Properties of the several Classes of Beings, and therefore cannot tell how far they are capable of acting. But this we know, that they are all in the Hand of God, who can suspend the ordinary Laws of Nature, and alter their several Courses whensoever it pleases him; and this is to a Demonstration certain, that to a Being of infinite Power, nothing is impossible. I come now to

XXIX. 3. The doctrinal Precepts of Scripture. And here I expect to be immediately ask'd, to what purpose did God ordain the several bloody and costly Sacrifices of the *Jewish* Church, so many Festivals, the painful Rite of Circumcision, and in short, the whole Yoak of *Jewish* Ceremonies; a Burden so great, that even St. Peter himself pronounces, that neither they, nor their Fathers were able to bear them? To this again, I answer, (*as a Man of Reason*)

Reason) I cannot tell. Who knows so well the particular Circumstances of that People, or the secret and unsearchable Designs of Providence, in the Institution of them, as to pretend to explain the particular *Reasons* of all or either of them? But is it contrary to *Reason* that they should be so ordained? Had they not been commanded from Heaven, it is not very probable they would have submitted to them. To this I expect it will be replied, that that was nothing more than Priestcraft, the *lucrative Inventions* of cunning Priests to enslave the People, and grow Fat upon their Oblations: That this has been an old Trick among *Priests of all Religions*, the *Talapoins*, the *Dervizes*, and the whole Catalogue of Mr. *Toland's Holy Cheats*. But pray, Gentlemen, consider that the Command of Circumcision was given to an honest old Country Gentleman 430 Years before any legal Priesthood was established, one that was so far from having any Design to impose upon the World, or put Mankind to any unnecessary Pain or Expence, that he practised upon no Body but himself and Family. He, though 99 Years of Age, submitted to the painful Operation, which one would think he should never have done, without a very good *Reason*: Nor could he have the least Hope or Intention, of making Proselites to so bloody an Institution, or making himself the Head and Director of a Party, by this means, since he was not in his own Country, among his own Friends and Dependants, who might possibly have been influenced by his Authority or Example; but he was in a strange Country, among a polite *Free-thinking People*. And tho' we read indeed, that

that the *Shechemites* submitted to it, yet it was not upon a religious View: But they did it by the Persuasion of their Prince, to oblige his amorous Son and Heir, and to encourage that honest laborious People to live and settle among them. As for the Business of Sacrifices, they were so far from being the Contrivance of the Priests, that it is easy to trace their Antiquity to the very Time of *Adam's* Fall. Dr. *Cave* conjectures, that the Eucharistical Oblation of the Fruits of the Earth, might be used in the Times of Innocence, and that it was the Dictate of pure natural Gratitude: And Men so well versed in History and polite Learning, as our Adversaries would be thought to be, would do well to shew us any civilized Nation, that did not offer Sacrifices to their respective Deities. They cannot but know, that there was as much *Reason* and good Sense, as much Politeness, and Freedom of Thought, in ancient *Greece* and *Rome*, as at present in *Great-Britain*; yet that this, amongst other Instances of religious Worship, was known to be a constant Part of their Devotion. As for Times and Places peculiarly appropriated to the several Parts of religious Worship, they are such necessary Circumstances, that he must have a very particular Sort of *Reason*, who can separate the one from the other. If we come now to the judicial Precepts, we shall be so far from finding there any Thing contrary to *Reason*, that, on the other hand, the greatest Part of them, (not to say the whole) seem to be founded on the strictest and most obvious Notions of natural Justice and Equity: Such were the Laws about *Servants*, *Manslaughter*, *cursing of Parents*, *Theft*,

Theft, Damage, Trespasses, Borrowing, Fornication, &c. As for the moral Precepts included in the Ten Commandments; and that fuller Explanation of them given by our Blessed Lord in his Sermon on the Mount; I do not remember that ever I have heard them charged with Unreasonableness or Absurdity, and therefore shall take it for granted they are not.

XXX. 4. But the greatest Difficulty is still behind, and that is the Mysteries of the Gospel, certain unintelligible Doctrines, (as the Blasphemers are pleased to express it) *imposed upon us as Articles of Faith, which no mortal Man can explain or comprehend, and yet we are told that these are necessary to be believed in order to Salvation,* which seems very absurd and unreasonable. And here I must premise a very necessary Distinction, tho' very much exploded by some late Scribblers, betwixt being *above our Reason* and *contrary to it.* This Distinction is Mr. Lock's as well as mine, and is so real and necessary, that it is impossible to think or talk rationally without it. By *Things above Reason,* I mean *such Things as could not have been discovered by Reason unassisted by Revelation, and the Modes of which (though they be revealed) cannot be comprehended by Reason.* Such are the Doctrines of the ever blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Resurrection, &c. By *Things contrary to Reason,* I mean *such Things as at first Sight, or by plain Consequence imply a Contradiction, as that the part is greater than the whole, that the same Thing can be and not be at the same time.* Mr. Lock instances only in the Resurrection, as a *Truth above Reason.*

Reason. I would then ask any Gentleman that laughs at this Distinction, Does he believe the Resurrection? I will suppose at least that he does. Why does he believe it? Can he demonstrate by an evident Chain of Reason the Necessity of a Resurrection in the Nature of Things? Could he have discovered it by the Strength of his Understanding, and the Light of Nature, if it had not been revealed? And as it is revealed, does he perfectly understand the Mode of the Resurrection? If he put the Negative upon all these, he must, I think, own that the Resurrection of the Body is a *Truth which his Reason cannot comprehend*, which therefore, by Consequence, is *above his Reason*. A Man may indeed (as a witty Author observes) *talk Nonsense as well as believe Nonsense, and call one Reason and t'other Faith*. But he that will talk common Sense, must own, that *a Truth which Reason cannot comprehend, is above Reason*. The Shortness and Weakness of our Understandings cannot comprehend, or explain many Things that are sensibly and demonstrably certain; but no Man sure will be so weak as to disbelieve his Senses, and deny the Certainty of several Effects in Nature, because he cannot explain their several Causes, nor the exact Method, Reason, and Manner of their Production. Let this be granted, and then let us see whether our Patrons of Reason must not disclaim their Senses as well as their Faith, if they resolve to believe nothing, of which they have not adequate Ideas; the necessary Modes and Relations of which, they cannot explain. What adequate Idea have these Gentlemen of Matter? What is the Essence of it? They tell you *it is an extended*

extended impenetrable Substance, having Parts without Parts. Well, but all this while we apprehend nothing by this Definition, but a Congeries of Accidents and Qualities, such as Extension, Impenetrability, &c. But what is the Subject, the *Substratum* of these Accidents? What is the Subject to which these Predicates belong? What is the naked Essence of Matter, stript of all its Accidents, which tho' inseparable in Fact may, one would think, be distinguished in the Understanding? And one would be apt to imagine, that * any Idea short of this, were inadequate and imperfect; but does any one doubt of its Existence? Do we not discourse, reason, and judge about it? And in short our Notions of Spirit, are as obscure and inadequate, as those of Matter; about which however we argue and draw Consequences, with as much Certainty, as from any other Subject or Matter of Science.

XXXI. The first and great Mystery, which is at present the stumbling Block of our rational Men, is that of the holy undivided Trinity; Three co-essential co-eternal Persons, subsisting in the same Essence. This, they say, is a Contradiction that *One* should be *Three*, and *Three* should be *One*, and so it would be indeed if they should be the same in the same Respect; but what the Catholick Church maintains upon the Authority of Scripture is, that they are *Three in Person*, and *One in Essence*. This we pretend no more to comprehend or explain than they do; for how can a finite Nature comprehend what is Infinite? But we assert that in the Account

* *This Mr. Lock affirms, Book II. C. 31. § 8. Human Understanding.*

of the *Holy Trinity* there is no Absurdity, no Contradiction to the Truth or Nature of Things: That the Father is particularly considered as the eternal Spring and Fountain of the Divinity: That the *Son* is generated of him by a necessary and *eternal Generation*: That the Holy Spirit proceeds from both by a *necessary and eternal Procession*: So that there can no Time be conceived, when the *Father* was without the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*. And tho' there be a Sort of Subordination implied in the *Generation* of the one and the *Procession* of the other; yet it is not inconsistent with the co-essential Equality which we maintain between the *Persons* in the *God-head*; and this may be illustrated by several Truths in Nature, that bear a kind of Resemblance to it. Could we suppose the Sun to be eternal, we must suppose its Light and Heat to be eternal, being both co-essential and co-eternal with the Sun, the proper and necessary Parent and Fountain of them both: These are to be considered subordinate as Cause and Effects; though not properly produced by the Agency or Efficiency of a pre-existent Being, but what the Schools call *Emanative*, whose Effects necessarily proceed from and co-exist with their Cause: So that tho' they be subordinate, yet they are co-essential and co-eternal. The human Soul also is a remote Copy and Emblem of the *Holy Trinity*; the Foundation of which is Life or Existence, which cannot be conceived without the co-existent essential Powers, Properties, or what you please of *Understanding* or *Light*, and of the *Will* or *Love*. The one answering to the *Father*, the other to the *Son*, the third to the *Holy Ghost*; tho' we pretend

not to explain this Mystery, but to vindicate it from the Charge of Absurdity or Contradiction. To sum up this Matter: Our Adversaries abuse us when they represent us as confessing *the Mysteries of the Gospel to be perfectly unintelligible*. The *Mode* of them is *above Reason*, but not the meaning of the Terms, nor the Existence of the Thing. *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* are intelligible Terms, we are very certain of the Existence of the Things, that they are *each God*, and that *God is one*. The Scripture teaches it, and the Mind understands it, and by consequence assents to it; but the *Mode* how being not revealed is utterly unknown, and cannot be assented to. Hence it appears, that the *Mystery* lies in the *Mode*, not in the Thing; and that this rational Belief or Assent is given to the Truth of a Proposition, whose Terms we in some Degree understand, though the *Mode* of it be unknown, which is assenting to the Thing not the *Mode*, which is *above Reason*, and cannot be comprehended by it. Which is not advancing the Belief or Assent of the Mind above what we perceive, but the Belief of the being of a Thing, whose *Mode* we cannot perceive. But to proceed;

XXXII. The next Difficulty is the Incarnation of the *Blessed Jesus*: Which was done, not by Conversion of the Godhead into Flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God. This they cannot apprehend, they understand not the Nature of this Union, and therefore reject it as contrary to *Reason*. But let them explain to me the Union of their own Souls and Bodies: Let them explain to me by what Ligament, two Substances of so different Natures

tures are united, and the Nature and Reason of those Laws of Union by which they act upon each other. Yea, let them explain to me, what the Cement or Ligament is, that unites the several Parts that compose their own Bodies, or the vilest Part of Matter; but these are Subjects of the most common and ordinary Experience, the Influence of Body and Soul upon each other, is what we every Moment feel and perceive; and when these Difficulties are explained, we will undertake to solve the other. If I believe any Thing, I must know what it is that I do believe, and the more I know of it, so much the greater will my Faith be; yet as it is required, that I should know what it is I believe, it is not therefore required, that I should have a distinct and full Comprehension of all the different Modes, Properties, Powers, and Relations of that Thing or Subject, which yet I may be very properly said to know, no more than it is requisite that I should distinctly and rationally comprehend the whole Mechanism of a Watch, and the Nature of Time, before I can be made to believe that it is so much of the Clock. Whether I believe that the *Messias* is God uniting himself to the human Nature; or whether with the *Arian*, I believe him only to be the first-born of all the Creatures, pre-existing before all Worlds, and by and through whom they were all created: Or lastly, whether with the *Socinian*, I believe him to be a mere Man, having no kind of Existence before he was born of the Blessed Virgin, but anointed with divine Power, and exalted above every Creature, it will be necessary to know what I mean by *God*, what by the *First-born of the Creatures*,

Creatures, what by Man, by Union, Creation, and Unction with divine Power; otherwise, I believe I know not what, or which is all one, I believe not at all. Yet it is not necessary therefore that I should have a *distinct and rational Comprehension* of the Nature and Manner of Subsistence either of *God*, or of the *First-born of the Creatures*, or of *Man*; or to be able fully to explain wherein consists this *Union, Creation, or divine Unction*, or to measure either of these by the Standard of *Human Reason*. If I am obliged to believe nothing without a clear and rational Comprehension of it, I must not only doubt or disbelieve the Existence of the *Messias*, but even of a *God*, till I can answer all the Objections that may be made by a cunning Sophister against a *self subsisting Being*, and remove all the seeming Contradictions that might be drawn from thence. Nay, I must doubt of, or disbelieve the very being of the *World*, and of every *Thing* in it, till I can give a rational Account how it could be either *from Eternity*, or by *Creation in time*; *if by Creation in time*, whether from nothing, or from *pre-existing uncreated Matter*, or from the *Substance of the Deity* it self; against all which there will be as insuperable Difficulties, as against the Proposition, that *Jesus Christ the Son of God, is God and Man*.

XXXIII. The last Difficulty I shall mention upon this Head, shall be that of the *Resurrection of the Body*; which gives great Offence to our free-thinking Gentlemen, who make as great a Mock at it, as their Predecessors of the Epicurean Sect did, when *St. Paul preached it at Athens, Acts xvii. 18.*

It

It is, say they, contrary to *Reason*, that a Body after it has rotted in the Earth, and undergone a thousand Changes of its Texture and Situation, should be again restored to its primitive Form, and have all its scatter'd Atoms reduced to their proper Place. To this I answer in general: *That with God all Things are possible*. But if I am particularly pressed to explain the Nature and Mode of the Resurrection, and wherein the Identity of this Resurrection Body shall consist: I answer, I cannot tell. But that there shall be a Resurrection of this mortal and corruptible Body, in such a Sense, as that it shall be properly *the same Body*, that was once united to every particular Soul, is not at all contrary to *Reason*. But if I am asked, How are the Dead raised up, and with what Body do they come? I answer with St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. *Thou Fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. And what thou sowest, thou sowest not that Body that shall be, but bare Grain; it may chance of Wheat, or of some other Grain. But God giveth it a Body as it hath pleased him, and to every Seed its own Body.* And when they can give us a rational and philosophical Account, of the Resurrection of a Seed sown in the Earth, which yet is the Object of every Day's Experience, then will I be bound to account for the *Reason* and *Philosophy* of the Resurrection Body. *

XXXIV. If I have with any Degree of Success, vindicated the Holy Scriptures from the Charge of Absurdity and Contradiction in the main Points and Articles of Truth: It will then follow, that there is at least a Possibility of their being true.

* *As thou knowest not what is the Way of the Spirit. And nor how the Bones do grow in the Womb of her that is with Child: even so thou knowest not the Works of God, who maketh all. Eccles. Cap. 11. v. 5.*

And if there be so, it is of the last Consequence to every Man, to enquire whether they are actually so or not; and this Enquiry must be made with a Vigour, a Zeal, and Earnestness equal to the Importance and Dignity of the Subject; which is no less than an Eternity of Happiness or Misery, reserved for us in another World, as the Consequence of our good or bad Behaviour in this. *Eternal Life, an incorruptible Inheritance, a never-fading Crown of Glory, everlasting Happiness,* are Subjects so transcendently great and valuable, that one would think the Promise of them should awaken the most drowsy Soul; encourage and quicken the most Indolent, to enquire into the Authority on which these Promises are grounded, and know and practise the several Terms on which they may be obtained. Consider, Gentlemen, with what indefatigable Zeal, with what amazing Application, even the most Lazy and Tender of you, lately pursued imaginary Treasures in the *South-Sea!* How many sleepless Nights, and restless Days you spent in a vain Pursuit of Bubbles: Your *Reason*, that boasted Privilege of a true-born *Briton*, was rejected as useless; it boggled not at a *Mystery* of Iniquity, which the very wisest of you owned you could not comprehend. All your Conversation run upon *Stocks, first and second Subscriptions, Difference*, and a Number of pedantick Phrases, coined in the Alley, and adjacent Coffee-houses, in defiance of that Politeness of Language and Behaviour, that you at other times profess. How did you give up your Understandings, and sacrifice your Fortunes to Directors, Stock-Jobbers, Brokers and Pick-pockets, upon

upon a distant, uncertain, precarious Hope of raising your Fortunes, and flourishing a little while, in the Eyes of the unthinking Multitude? Now suppose any new Project should be started, any fresh Scheme, full of advantagious Proposals should be set on Foot; ask your selves the Question, would you not patiently read them, and consider the Terms proposed? Would you not compute and calculate, and call in the Assistance of some Friend learned in Arithmetick, and skilful in the Mysteries of *Change-Alley*, to advise and direct you, whether there was any Proportion betwixt the Hazard of losing, and Hopes of getting? I know you would. Come then, do the same Thing in the Affair of Religion; sit down and consider calmly the Proposals offered to you; if you are a little puzzled, as it is likely you may, in a Subject so much out of your Way, consult those who are more conversant in such Sort of Affairs. *Parsons* I know you despise, but chuse the best you can meet with; I will answer for it, you have as fair a Chance, to meet with a Man of Understanding and Probity among them, as at the *South-Sea* House, or the Bank of *England*; and give him not so much Credit, nor so much implicit Faith, as you would your Broker; he does not desire it, nor does the Cause need it. He will tell you, what is demonstrably certain, that Religion proposes the Reversion of everlasting Glory and Happiness in the World to come; all that you are required to subscribe, is, a Desire to be happy, to renounce certain uneasy Lusts, base Appetites, scandalous Vices, which are so far from being any Part of our worldly Happiness, that they are

the Seeds and Fountains of Shame, Sickness, Pain, Poverty, Misery, and Death. I presume you are a little surprized at this strange Proposal, and desire Time to think upon it, as *Felix* did, when St. *Paul* reasoned with him about a Judgment to come.

XXXV. I will now suppose, (for Argument's sake) that any one of you is resolved in good earnest, to inquire impartially into this Affair; to read seriously the Proposals laid down in the Holy Scripture, with a zealous Resolution to learn and practise his Duty. To this Man I propose, in the first Place, a punctual and regular Observation of the moral Duties of natural Religion, with Regard to God, himself, and his Neighbour. Let him subdue and regulate his disorderly Appetites, be free from Prejudices, renounce all his Vices, and in a Word, live up to the Dictates of natural Conscience.

Virtus est vitium fugere, & Sapientia prima est Stultitiam caruisse. —

These are as necessary Preparations for the understanding the Nature of evangelical Obedience, Truth, and Holiness, as Skill in *Architecture* would be to understand the Structure of *Noah's Ark*, or *Solomon's Temple*; *Geography* to determine the Situation and Distance of Places; *Chronology* to settle the several Periods of History; *Grammar* to understand the Construction of Sentences; and *Languages* to form a critical Judgment of the Text. And without such previous preparative Knowledge, every Part of the aforesaid Arts and Sciences, will be mysterious and unintelligible to the unlearned Reader;

Reader; as much as the Doctrine of *Asymptots*, would be to a young Mathematician, tho' demonstrable by the Learned in that Science, as much as any other Proposition in *Euclid*. The Evidence proper to evince any Truth, answers to the Medium in Vision, and must be proportioned to the Nature of the Object to be perceived, or the Truth to be explained and understood. And this Evidence or Medium is as different, as the several Sorts of Truths to be apprehended: Historical Evidence is quite different from Mathematical, and Mathematical from Moral; the Evidence of *Sense* is different from that of *Reason*, and that of *Reason* distinct from that of *Faith*. To call therefore for Demonstration, clear and adequate Ideas, &c. in Articles of Faith, is as absurd, as it would be in Matters of Fact or Sense; which, tho' it may appear a little surprizing, I shall endeavour to explain more fully by and by.

XXXVI. Let the Man then, that resolves to use his *Reason*, and think freely, put himself into this proper and necessary Disposition of Head and Heart. Let him discharge his Wenches, and if he cannot contain, let him marry and live soberly. Let him act justly and honourably with all Mankind, spend his Evenings with Men of Virtue and Honour, go to Bed sober, and not forget to say his Prayers Morning and Evening. Let him lay aside his stupid Prejudices against the *Parson*, and give him at least as much Credit, as he does his *Lawyer* and his *Physician*. And then in God's Name, let him use his *Reason*. Let him think as freely as he pleases, and we will join issue with him, and follow this

Guide, so far as it will lead us. Let him examine every Truth, every Proposition, with the nicest Criticism, the severest Scrutiny. This Prescription to make a good Free-Thinker, is as old as *Pythagoras*, who himself was one; which for the Sake of some pretty Gentlemen, I shall translate into *English*, out of his Golden Verses. "Be thou, says he, temperate in eating, drinking, and Diversions. Never close thine Eyes to sleep, till thou hast thrice examined the Behaviour of the past Day, begging Pardon of God for thine Offences, and giving him Thanks if thou hast done well. Let this be done with Industry, Diligence, and Zeal, and this will infallibly lead thee into the Paths of divine Virtue. Add to this, fervent Prayer to God, who will so enlighten thee, that thou shalt see and know the mysterious Secrets of God and Nature." This is a strange Recipe to the Generality of our young Gentry, whose Heads are too full of the Gaieties of Life, *Balls*, *Masquerades*, *Ombre*, *Basset*, *Assignations*, *Billet doux*, &c. to enter seriously and heartily, into such a Method of Learning as this: But this they may depend upon, there is no other Way. In short, let them use the same Means, with the same Industry and Zeal, that they would to understand any other Art or Science, and the Success will be certain.

XXXVII. If he would enquire whether these Books, that compose the Canon of the Old and New Testament be genuine, let him give us the same fair Play, that he would any prophane Writer: Let him candidly examine the proper Evidences, the Credibility of Relators, and the Agreement of their Testi-

Testimonies, and then let him pronounce, whether we have not in a critical Light, better Arguments for the Genuineness and Divinity of them, than of any other Book in the whole World. If he would judge of the Truth of one particular Fact, let him not be so unreasonable as to require more, or other Sort of Evidence, than the Case requires, and the Nature of the Thing will admit of. If he would judge of the Doctrines and Precepts, let him fairly and calmly consult his Reason, with Regard to natural Morality, and the Nature and Extent of that Obligation ; and he will soon find, that all the Precepts of the Gospel, are only the Doctrines of natural Religion, improved, set in a clearer Light, enforced by higher Motives and nobler Rewards. But if he would judge of Miracles recorded, or Mysteries proposed in a Book, which has all the external Arguments to prove it genuine, that can be desired, let him be so candid, as not to wrangle and dispute, and call for different Evidence than what the Nature of the Thing will admit of ; but be satisfied, that whereas he thinks he should have Reason enough to believe the History, were it not for those Difficulties that are occasionally interspersed thro' it ; let him allow the same Evidence to have its just Weight for both, if the one be owned not to exceed the Power of God, and the other not to contradict the established Nature and Truth of Things. Here is the true Notion and Use of *Reason* in Religion. A *Free-Thinker* in this Sense is truly a Philosopher, a Lover of Truth, an Enemy to Bigotry and Superstition : Such were the *Free-Thinkers* of Old, the Patrons and Advocates of *Truth* or *Reason*.

son in the Heathen World; *Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Plutarch, Tully, &c.* who with great Strength of Reason opposed the epidemical Vices and Errors of the Times they lived in: Men of large comprehensive Spirits, who from just Conceptions of the Nature of God and human Souls, from a due Consideration of the Frame and System of Nature, the regular Oeconomy of the World, and the Harmony and Beauty of Providence, raised such Systems of natural Religion, as effectually overturned all that Ignorance, Superstition and Idolatry, with which the World was at that Time over-run. These they boldly and courageously opposed, and hazarded even their Lives, (as *Socrates* in particular did) in defence of what they taught. Such were also the venerable Saints, Martyrs, and Confessors in the Christian Church; who upon better Light, and nobler Principles, boldly taught, and defended, even unto Death, the Faith of Christ crucified, against the Errors and Idolatry of the Heathens, as well as the obstinate Blindness and Perverseness of the *Jews*. Such also were many of our first Reformers from Popery; where Men had long been taught to renounce their Reason, disbelieve their Senses, and blindly follow their Leaders with an implicit Obedience. This our Reformers broke through with a noble and undaunted Zeal; they translated the Scriptures into the vulgar Tongue, that the People might know and understand their Duty; they canvassed with great Ingenuity and Freedom of Thought, all the Articles of Faith, all the Canons, Constitutions, Rubricks, and Liturgies, and compared them with the Holy Scriptures, and most

most ancient Records of the Christian Church; and then separating the Chaff from the Wheat, the Precious from the Vile, they published to the World, the Grounds and Reasons upon which they acted, and so restored in a good Measure, the Truth from the Bondage of Corruption, and demonstrated the Christian Worship to be, what it really is, *a Reasonable Service*.

XXXVIII. If our modern Free-Thinkers would act thus, they would discover themselves worthy of that honourable Appellation, which they vainly assume: Would they candidly, ingenuously, and impartially enquire after Truth, we would gladly join with them in their Enquiries. But their Case is quite contrary, they examine Truth, and reform the Errors of Mankind, with no more Regularity, no better Design, than *Jack Cade, Wat Tyler, or Oliver Cromwell*, at the Head of an Army of Vagabonds, and Enthusiasts, attempted to reform the Abuses of Government, which they intended to subvert and destroy. Their wild indigested Whim-sies may be called *Freedom of Thought*, with the same Propriety, as *Thames Ribaldry and Billingsgate Rhetorick* may be called *Freedom of Speech*; or the Insolence of *Mobocks and Street-Robbers*, *Freedom of Action*, i. e. a Liberty of thinking, speaking, and acting, without any Checks of Honour, Conscience, Modesty and Truth. Hence it comes to pass, that all their Pretences to Reason, are mere Farce and Bantler; their boasted Freedom of Thought, is errant Bigotry; some of the Bullies in the Party, never thought in their Lives, have no positive Notions of any Thing, but their Heads are stuffed with Scraps and

and Collections, out of certain vile libertine Authors, who have laboured in the Cause. I could not but smile the other Day, to hear one of these *Goliabs* defying the Armies of the Living God; who when he was attack'd by a modest Gentleman that sate near him, and gave him close Play, with clean Reasons and Arguments, being at a stand, scratched his Head, and wished for a better Memory, for that he had read the Answer to that Argument, but had really forgot it. In short, they are so far from reasoning calmly and dispassionately with us, that they attack us with Noise and Clamour: They raise the Passions of the *Posse*, by popular Cant and Declamation; and try to destroy by Force and Fraud, what they know can never be hurt, by a sober and rational Enquiry. The idle indigested Notion of Liberty, which has for some Years past, been the *Shibboleth* of a certain Sett of weak Politicians and Reformers, seems to have laid us under a judicial Thickness of Skull, and Hardness of Heart; and by that empty specious Sound we are deluded into the most slavish Absurdities, both in Politicks and Religion. And because the Clergy (some of them I mean, for many of them are too well-bred to interrupt the Tranquillity of their Betters) have still the Courage to assert the Truth, and bear their Testimony against the crying Dullness and Iniquity of these new Reformers, the Cry is therefore raised against them: In the first Place, *Gebal* and *Ammon*, and *Amalek*, the *Philistines*, with them that dwell at *Tyre*; Rakes, Libertines, Jews, Turks, Infidels, Hereticks, Schismaticks, Stock-Jobbers, Knaves and Fools are all united in this generous Design to oppose

pose Priestcraft, suppress the Herd of Bigots, and settle the Empire of *Reason* upon the Ruins of *common Sense*. With this View, they are marked to be hunted down as a Sett of turbulent seditious Mortals, Enemies to the publick Peace, Men that turn the World upside down: As a lazy Sett of Men, who enjoy Stipends and Honours on purpose to mislead and abuse us, and domineer over our Understanding: As a parcel of Hypocrites, who practise in Secret, what they condemn in Publick, and do not believe themselves, what they propose to others as Articles of Faith. I wish I could reply to this, that the Charge is absolutely false: But let us, for Argument's Sake, suppose it to be in some measure true. But what then? Is there therefore no Foundation of Truth in Religion, are there no Men of Virtue, Learning, and Integrity, that profess to believe and defend it? Would this be thought good Reasoning in other Cases? I own there are Knaves and Fools in all Professions. And why, considering all Things, why, I say, should we wonder more, to see a Deist, an Heretick, or Libertine, in an Ecclesiastical Habit, than to see a Coward in a Regimental Dress, Oppressors and Pick-pockets adorned with Titles of Honour, and riding in Coaches and Six; or that Men chosen to be Guardians of a Constitution, should for Pensions and Places betray and ruin it? Yet of all these, we have many Instances in our *English* History, both before, and since the Reformation.

XXXIX. And as our two famous Universities (whom God long preserve!) are the Seminaries of Religion, Learning, sound Reason, and good Principles,

ciples, they are therefore attacked with the same blind outragious Zeal; every scribbling Fool, whose want of Learning, Virtue, or good Manners, has expos'd him to the Censures of those learned and venerable Bodies, who has been either punished, or expelled as an unworthy Member of a regular Society, is encouraged to vent all his Spleen, to exhaust his whole Stock of Dulness against those whom he calls the Authors of his Disgrace. Others that envy them their delicious Retirements, magnificent Structures, and ample Revenues, which the Piety of great and good Men has bestowed, for the Glory of God, the Honour of Religion, the Support of Learning and Learned Men; seek Occasions to revile them as a Sett of useleſſ musty old Fellows, who eat up the Labours of the Industrious, and consume in Luxury and Idlenes, what might be applied to much better Purposes. All this is Cant and Clamour, they know what they say to be false; but they know, that so long as those learned and venerable Bodies stand and prosper, their Free-thinking Schemes will make but slow Progres; the Genius of those Places will, in spight of Opposition, triumph at last, over the Spirit of Dulness and Error that opposes it. May they then rejoice in their Revenues, and make a right Use of the blessed Advantages for Retirement and Study, which they there enjoy. May their noble Structures stand unshaken and inviolable, free from the worse than Gotbick Invasions of Atheists, Libertines, and Free-Thinkers; and may the Lord God add to the Number of their Sons and Friends, *how many ſoever they be, an hundred fold, and that the Eyes of my Lord the King may*

may see it, 2 Sam. xxiv. 3. But I have almost forgot my Subject.

XL. Here then let us join issue upon the Foot of clear and impartial *Reason*. I hope I have made it appear, that there is nothing in the Christian System contrary to *Reason*; that therefore it is at least possible that it may be true; that therefore it is of the highest Consequence to be assured whether it be so or not; that this Assurance cannot be had without a sincere, honest, and impartial Enquiry; that this honest impartial Enquiry can never be made by any Man who is under the Dominion and Power of any Vice, Lust or Passion; that a Man is then said to be under the Dominion of any Vice or irregular Lust when he constantly and habitually indulges it, obeys it at every Call, and professes to justify the Practice of it as lawful and innocent; such a Man is (as I have already observed) under a moral, and perhaps, a natural Incapacity of discerning not only the Beauty of Holiness, but even the rational Evidence of moral Truths; that therefore the first Step towards an impartial Enquiry after Truth, Virtue and Happiness, is to have an honest and good Heart, free from irregular Lusts, unreasonable Appetites, and immoral Habits, directed by the strict Rules of Morality and natural Religion, disengaged from Prejudices, and open to rational Conviction whenever it shall be offered. And to this you are indispensably obliged.

1. As you are Men of Reason.

2. As you are Men of Honour.

The Existence of a God, the Foundation of all Religion is so agreeable to *Reason*, that no Man of *Reason* and common Sense ever denied it. *There have been Fools who have said in their Heart there is no God*; but scarce was there ever found any Number of Men that ever professed to disbelieve it. That this God is a Being of infinite Perfection, is so agreeable to *Reason* that it would be a Contradiction to deny it. Come then, Gentlemen, upon these two fundamental Principles let us proceed, let us survey our selves, and the World about us; let us reflect upon the Faculties of our Souls, the Texture and Condition of our Bodies, the relation we stand in to him that made us, and to the rest of God's Creatures, and from the plain simple Principles of *Reason and common Sense*, let us see what Discoveries we are able to make of the Will of God concerning us, of the Duty we owe to him as our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, the Love we owe to one another as Creatures of the same God, and Partakers of the same Nature; what Powers and Abilities we have to perform that Duty, and answer the End of our Creation.

XLI. Our first Reflections upon our selves, represent us as created dependent Beings, endued with Power of thinking and acting, which we are constantly employing to find out and procure *Happiness* to our selves. Our *Reason* tells us, that *Happiness* can be nothing else but the *Enjoyment of Good*. That *Good* is the proper Object of *Love* or *Desire*, that therefore every Thing is *lovely* or *desirable* so far and no farther than it appears to us as *Good*; that therefore the *Loveliness* of any Being or Thing rises

rises in proportion to its *Goodness*. That *Goodness* is the chief Perfection of any Being, and that therefore the most perfect Being must be the *Best*; and by consequence the most *lovely*, and the *Love* and *Enjoyment* of him must be our *supreme Happiness*. This short Chain of Deductions leads us to that *Love of God*, considered in his own abstracted Perfections, which the holy Scriptures recommend to us as the *first and great Commandment*; which is also more strongly enjoyned us by the Dictates of the *same Reason*, considering our selves as created by him. Nothing but the over-flowings of infinite Love could move him to create us, and he could propose no other End of our Creation but himself. *Our Reason* tells us, that if he made us, he has an absolute and uncontroulable Power over us; that if he made us for himself, he has all possible *Reason* to claim our best Services, and expect an absolute and unlimited Obedience; that we are therefore bound to make the strictest and most impartial Enquiry into his *Will* concerning us, that we may be able to pay him an acceptable Service, and obey him as we ought to do. If there be no express Commands or Revelation of his *Will* to direct us in particular *Acts of Duty*, yet our *Reason* directs us to *love him and honour him* above all Things; it obliges us to be always ready to discoyer his *Will*, and glad to obey it; it obliges us to do every Thing that may seem acceptable to him, and scrupulously avoid every Thing that may be disagreeable. *Our Reason* tells us, that whatsoever is opposite to his *Nature*, must be contrary to his *Will*, and that whatsoever is agreeable to *the one*, must be so to *the other*. *Infinite Goodness* is (if I

may so express my self) the essential Character of God, which the Scriptures express with the strongest Emphasis, *that God is Love*. His whole Procedure, with his Creatures in giving them their Being, preserving them in it, and providing for their Happiness and well-being, is but one continued Scene of *Love*; and if God hath so *loved* us, there is the *highest Reason* in the World, that we should also love him, and shew it to the World, by endeavouring to be like him in all his imitable Perfections of Goodness, Righteousness, Purity, and Truth.

XLII. And as Reason thus directs us to discover the Duty we owe to God, so does it also to that other Branch of moral Righteousness, our Duty towards one another. As we are all created by the same God, descended from the same common Parent of Mankind, equally produced, preserved, and supported by the same infinite Goodness of God; it is highly agreeable to *Reason*, that we should shew the same just and equitable Regard to each other, as every one of us thinks he has a right to expect himself. Hence proceeds the most *reasonable* Rule of Justice that ever was proposed to the World, *That we do to every one, as we would expect in like Circumstances they should do to us*. A Rule, so *reasonable and so plain*, that the meanest Capacity can understand, and reduce it to Practice. Whatever I judge *reasonable* or *unreasonable* for me to do to him, and as I cannot be patient or easy to be injured, persecuted, slandered, or abused, either in my Person, my Fortune, my Reputation, my Family or my Friends: So I am self-condemned, whenever I suffer my self to injure or grieve my Neighbour by wronging

for him to me, & some thing reasonable or unreasonable

wronging him in his Estate, by defrauding him of his Due, by assisting others in their Oppressions, by abusing his good Name, by maiming his Body, by injuring, corrupting, debauching, and ruining his Wife, Children, Brethren, Sisters, or other Friends and Relations, who are near and dear to him; and the *Reason of this is as evident as that the Ratio of two equal Numbers must be equal.*

XLIII. And as this is the plain Dictate of *Reason*, so it is also of *Honour*. *Honour* (the Name I mean, for the Thing it self is little known, and less regarded) is the Idol of the polite World, to which Men of all Ranks and Professions pay their Adoration. Be they ever so loose from the Ties of Religion, the Checks of Conscience, or the Restraints of Virtue; however dissolute they may be in their Morals, deaf to the Demands of Justice, and dead to the tender Sentiments of Humanity, yet all profess themselves *Men of Honour*. In short, there is nothing more common than to see Friendships betrayed, Virtue oppressed, Innocence debauched; Families ruined, and our Country bought and sold by Men of *professed Honour*, who would cut your Throat, or ruin you as effectually some other Way, if you should dare to dispute their Pretensions to it. Is Honour then nothing but a bare Name, an empty Sound? Is there no determinate Idea annexed to it? If there be, it will be worth while to enquire after it, to discover its Nature and Obligation, that those who act disagreeably to it, may be persuaded to alter their Conduct, or renounce their Pretensions to it.

XLIV. The Word is equivocal, used in very different Senses. In its primitive meaning it signifies nothing but *Virtue* or *true Merit*; in this Sense it is used by * *Horace* and † *Juvenal* in innumerable Places, which *Tully* expresses by the Word *Honestum*, particularly in that Passage, *de Off.* 5. *Quibus ex rebus conflatur & efficitur id, quod querimus, Honestum: quod etiam si nobilitatum non sit, tamen honestum sit: quodq; verè dicimus, etiam si à nullo laudetur, naturā esse laudabile.* Upon this alone depends the true and proper Distinction of Characters. And as the Wisdom of all Ages and all Nations have thought it just and proper to reward and distinguish Persons of superior Merit by certain honourable Titles, and external Badges, to attract and command the Reverence of Inferiors, and encourage others to excel; hence the Word *Honour* in a second Sense frequently signifies the honourable Rewards or Titles given to Men of superior Virtue; and thirdly, in a large Sense it often stands for the bare Sound of high Titles, and the Glitter of splendid Badges and Ornaments, exclusive of any intrinsic Value or Merit in the Man that wears them. And in the fourth and last Sense it signifies the private Opinion which every Man has, and desires others to have, of his own superior Merit, upon which he pronounces himself, and desires to be thought a Man of Honour. As the first Sense is the only proper one, it is certain that a Man of superior Virtue is, without these

* *Virtus repulsa nescia sordidae
Intaminatis fulget honoribus,
Nec sumit aut ponit secures
Arbitrio popularis auræ.*

† *Nobilitas sola est atq; unica Virtus.*

exter

external Distinctions, really and truly *a Man of Honour*; and that Titles and Badges of Honour without intrinsick Merit are Marks of Infamy and Re-proach to him that wears them.

*Falsus honor juvat & mendax infamia terret,
Quem, nisi mendosum & mendacem?*

Were I to define Honour, I would call it *the Flower of Virtue*, as it consists not only in the Practice of every Virtue, but in a certain Delicacy of Behaviour that gives it its Form and Beauty; thus for Instance, A just Man may be properly said to be a *Man of Virtue*. Fear of Punishment, Loss of Reputation, &c. may influence him to be punctually just and true in all his Dealings; whilst a *Man of Honour* enters into every Scene and Action of Life, with a steady and immutable Regard not only to Justice, but to Decency and Propriety of Behaviour, with regards to the different Relations in which he stands. He is not only just, but generous and bountiful; he not only satisfies the Law, but every Demand of Humanity, Compassion, Gratitude and Charity, and disdains to do, or seem to do any Thing that looks little, sordid, or penurious, as much as a Lady of strict Virtue would abhor the most remote Avenues to Obscenity or Lewdness. He is in short, in the Language of *Horace*,

Virtutis veræ custos, rigidusq; satelles.

And as such, is under the strictest Obligations of Morality both to God and Man. Whenever he reflects upon his Maker, he must regard him with the most exalted Gratitude, as the Author and Preserver of his Being, and the bountiful Giver of all the Blessings

Blessings he enjoys. Every Thing that may contribute to his Happiness, every Article of his Enjoyments, whether Health of Body, Soundness of Mind, Riches or Friends, must all be considered as the Gifts of God, and call for the most grateful Returns of Love, Honour, and Obedience. But to overlook such transcendent Favours, and disregard the Giver, yea to employ those very Gifts to dishonour and affront him, to question his Being, to burlesque his Attributes, to ridicule every Thing that comes recommended with the Stamp of divine Authority, has something in it not only *dishonourable*, but *monstrous and diabolical*.

XLV. And here I cannot help taking Notice of an Argument frequent in the Mouths of these Gentlemen, drawn from a Presumption that the Torments shall not be strictly eternal, but shall one time or other have an end, by which they support and encourage each other in a lewd, profligate, unthinking, impenitent Course of Life. Not to enter into the Truth or Reasons of such a Persuasion, even allowing, but not granting it to be true: What a base, ungenerous Turn of Mind, what shocking Ingratitude does he discover, who from thence takes occasion to insult and abuse such stupendous Mercy? A generous, grateful Mind would melt with Humility and Joy at such an amazing Instance of omnipotent Love; and tho' he may have in time past slighted the Terrors of the Lord, yet such surprizing Goodness could not fail but lead him to Repentance. Such an Act of Grace could it be vouchsafed to the Apostate Angels, after so many Ages spent in Chains of Darkness, and dreadful Expectation of Judgment, would

would doubtless be received with Joy unspeakable, and fill those gloomy Regions of Despair with Songs of Praise and Thanksgiving, or however could not make them worse, if it did not make them better; in short the Case is at first sight too monstrous to need any Aggravation. But to return.

XLVI. *A Man of Honour* cannot transgress his Duty to his Neighbour. As every direct Act of Injustice is a Contradiction to the plain Dictates of *Reason*, so is every Appearance or Suspicion of Injustice, Fraud, Violence, Treachery, or Ingratitude directly opposite to all the Rules and Principles of Honour; and every Man alive says and thinks the same, when others are the Aggressors, and he the Sufferer. Every Deviation then from our Duty to God and Man, is a direct Violation of all the Rules of *right Reason*, and the Principles and Laws of *Honour*, and must ever stand condemned as such by those who pretend to be guided by the Dictates of either. Upon this Foot, let us examine a little into one of the fashionable Vices of this polite Age, which in high Complaisance to the Flesh and the Devil, well-bred Sinners call by the soft Names of Love and Gallantry, which they have so thoroughly persuaded themselves are innocent, that you shall hear a young Fellow talking with great Gaiety of Heart of an Affair he has upon his Hands, (you would imagine with his Lawyer or his Goldsmith) when he is going to debauch an innocent young Creature, the Daughter perhaps or Wife of his Friend; to seduce a credulous unwary Acquaintance into Shame, Misery, Diseases, Poverty, and Damnation; and perhaps to entail a Succession of Mis-

ries and Distresses upon a virtuous, reputable, flourishing Family. The most notorious and criminal Act of Lewdness is *Adultery*, (Take me right, I mean amongst the Females of our own Species ; for an unlimited Complaisance to all the other Species and to either Sex, *so that care be taken to continue the Race of Mankind*, is the declared Principle of the *Rights of the Church*, p. 264.) so complicated an Iniquity, common as it is in Practice, is too infamous to be defended upon the foot of *Reason*, and as such has been condemned by the most savage Nations.

— *Campestres melius Scythæ,*
Quorum plaustra vagas ritè trahunt domos :
Dos est (illis) magna parentum
Virtus, & metuens alterius viri
Certo fædere castitas.
Aut peccare nefas, aut pretium est mori. Hor.

Common Reflection as well as woful Experience confirms *Horace's* Observation upon this Sort of Lewdness, that it is a Sort of *Original Sin* in the Corruption and Ruin of a Nation.

Fæcunda culpæ sæcula nuptias
Primum inquinavere & genus & domos ;
Hoc fonte derivata clades
In patriam populumq; fluxit.

XLVII. Well! (say they) there is something not quite so clean nor reputable in the Busness of *Adultery*, we cannot gravely and seriously defend it, there are single Women enough to be met with, without breaking Enclosures ; and sure there can be no harm in a little Diversion of that Sort, where no Man's Property

Property is invaded, and where the Women are as well inclined as we. In answer to this, I beg leave to ask one Question. Suppose one of these Gentlemen were a Father, and had Daughters, would he be pleased to have them seduced and debauched? I hope there is no Man (even in this Age of Monsters) so abandoned as to say, Yes. If he has any Reason to assign for saying, No; He may assure himself, that the same Reason will conclude for every other Father in the World as well as himself. If he can assign no Reason, he may conclude it is the Dictate of pure Nature, and unprejudiced Reason, and that natural Affection which every good Parent has for his Children, which prompts and obliges him to wish them well, to desire and promote their Interest, their Honour, their Reputation, and their Happiness, and to condemn and abhor those as unjust and dishonourable, who endeavour to seduce them into Sin, Shame, Diseases, and Poverty in this World, and eternal Ruin of Body and Soul in the next. Ay, but (say they) it may chance that they have no Parents, they may be perfectly free from any Restraints of Authority or Duty, and by consequence may dispose of their Favours as they see fit, without afflicting or injuring any Body. If there be any young Woman so destitute of Friends and Relations, so left to the wide World, as to have no Friend to assist, advise, or comfort her; surely her Case would recommend her to the Pity and Generosity of every Man of Honour and Virtue, instead of exposing her to Guilt, and Shame and Misery. So tender (I had almost said so sacred) a Regard is due to the fair Sex, that any Outrage, Affront,

or Injury offered to that lovely Part of our Species, has been ever regarded by Men of Sense and Honour as ungenerous and unmanly; but *Widows and Orphans* are by all the Laws of *Chevalry*, the immediate Care and Wards of every brave and gallant Man, and an Injury offered to them is one of the most detestable Acts of Treachery and Injustice; and if robbing them of their Virtue, debauching their Innocence, and exposing them to Prostitution, Diseases, Beggary, and Damnation be no Injury, I would be glad to know what is.

XLVIII. But all this is answered either with a loud Laugh, or some stale common Place Rhetorick upon the mighty *Power of Love*, *Jupiter and Europa*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, &c. If *Love, virtuous and honourable Love* (for nothing else deserves that sacred Name) be really the Case, there is a safe and honourable Way of expressing it, if it be prudent, or checking and diverting it, if it be not: But if Love be only the Pretence to cover a lewd Design upon her Virtue, too infamous to be owned; if all the detestable Arts of Iniquity, Treachery, Lying, and Perjury, are made use of to convince the good-natur'd credulous Creature, that your Intentions are honourable, and a thousand lying Excuses invented, and supported by new Ones, why you cannot make her happy as you intend, only till you have an Opportunity of accomplishing your brutish Designs, let every unprejudiced Person judge what Name and what Treatment such a Person deserves. A Lie upon any account is so unworthy a Man of Honour, that it is justly deemed one of the highest Affronts to charge it upon any one; but to persist in a Scene

of Falshood, Treachery, and Lying for whole Months together, in order to ruin a Person, who by these Perjuries is seduced to believe you a Man of Virtue and Honour, has such a Complication of Iniquity, Barbarity, and Ingratitude, as no Words can sufficiently express. If the same Method of reasoning were applied to other Instances of Immorality, such as *Murder* under all its different Names, Forms, and Apologies; *Robbery*, whether on the Highway, or behind the Counter, *Change Alley*, or the Gaming Table, *Westminster-Hall*, or *Smithfield*, &c. They would all appear to be equally contrary to the Dictates of unprejudiced *Reason*, and the true Notions and Rules of *Honour*; and that therefore those Gentlemen who profess to act agreeably to both, are obliged to practise all the Duties of Morality both to God and Man.

XLIX. Thus far we are conducted by *Reason* to discern and acknowledge the Obligations, and Excellency of *moral Virtue*, which our blessed Lord tells the young Man in the Gospel, *Luke* xix. 17. is a necessary Step towards entring into the divine evangelical Life; *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments*; and when the young Man ask'd him, *which?* Jesus said, *thou shalt do no Murder; thou shalt not commit Adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; honour thy Father and thy Mother; and thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* *All these, said he, I have kept from my Youth up.* Where is the Man that can say the same for himself? And yet if he could, he might, like him, be far from the *Kingdom of God*. Our *Reason*, 'tis true, conducts us to the Paths of Mora-

Morality, and tells us we must walk in them : But, alas ! how few are there that attend to its Commands, or follow its Direction !

— *Video meliora, proboque
Deteriora sequor.* —

Is the just Complaint of every serious thinking Man. We float in the Ocean of this World under the Conduct of our Passions, rather than the Direction of *Reason*; nay, instead of using *our Reason* to guide and regulate our Passions, our Passions often debauch and corrupt *our Reason*, and employ it in the vilest Slavery. In a Word, the more we know of our selves, the more are we convinced, that in our natural State, notwithstanding the boasted Privilege of *our Reason*, we are poor, weak, impotent Creatures. We feel the Violence of our Passions, and the Weaknes of our Resolutions, the Shortness and Narrownes of our Understanding, the Perverseness of our Wills, and the Corruption of our Hearts ; we are transported with Joy, and dejected with Sorrow for meer Trifles, and finding this Impotence and Emptiness in our selves, we wander abroad, and go out of our selves to seek for little Comforts and Amusements to divert the constant Sense of our Weakness, and Infirmitiy; we catch at every Phantom, pursue every Shadow of Happines, every gay Bubble that dances before our Eyes, which, if we chance to overtake it, breaks in our Hands, and leaves us full of Anxiety and Disappointment ; with the same Eagerness we pursue the next Bauble that comes in our Way, and by thus keeping our selves in Motion, and diverting from one Object to another,

other, we make a Shift to preserve our selves in a tolerable Temper, without sinking into Dejection and Melancholy. The Tendency of Corruption is to Despondency and Despair, and the Centre of corrupted Nature is *Hell*. We struggle and bustle all we can in this Life to keep out of it, but at last our Strength fails, our Weight prevails, Death comes, and we flounce into this Abyss of Misery, if God by his Almighty Grace has not bestowed upon us another Principle, another Tendency to raise us up to Heaven.

L. Let us not look for any Strength then in the natural Man; view him on what Side you please, we can find nothing in him but Weakness and Infirmitiy. 'Tis God alone, who by the Power of his omnipotent Grace, can enlighten our Darkness, strengthen and purify our Wills, sustain our Life as long as he pleases, and at last change all our Infirmities of Soul and Body into a State of immortal Happiness and Glory. To him therefore as our Maker, Preserver, and Restorer, *our Reason* directs us to apply our selves, as a Being of infinite Goodness, Wisdom, and Power, who is both willing and able to succour our Infirmities, and supply us with all Things necessary for the Comfort, Improvement, and Perfection of our Natures; which if we are sensible we want, *Reason* direct us to ask by diligent and affectionate Prayers. This is the Prescription of *Pythagoras* *, and has been the Practice of all wise

* Ταῦτα σὲ τὸ θεῖον αἴρετος εἰς ἔχνα θέσσα,
Ναι μὰ τὸ αἰνιζέσσε πύχα πολλόντα τελεατῶν
Παγγαὶ αἰνάνι φύσεως, ἀλλ' ἔχνα ἐπ' ἐργοῖς
Θεοῖσιν ἐπενξάρθρῳ τελίσσει.

and good Men, who had a just Sense of their Wants and Infirmities, and the Necessity they were under of imploring the divine Assistance. We have a very remarkable one * of their Want of divine Assistance to know and obey the Truth, to enlighten the Blindness of their Understandings, to correct the perverse Byass of their Wills, and advance them to the true and proper Perfection of their Nature†.

“ I beseech thee, Lord, the Father and Director of
 “ the Mind of Man, grant that we may never for-
 “ get the Dignity of our Nature, and assist us as
 “ free Agents in all our Endeavours to conquer the
 “ Corruption of the Flesh, and cleanse our selves
 “ from our brutish Affections, that we may subdue
 “ and govern them, and reduce them to the State
 “ and Use for which Nature intended them. Help
 “ us to correct our Reason, and unite it, by the
 “ Guidance of the Light of Truth to the incor-
 “ ruptible Root and Centre of Being; lastly, I be-
 “ seech my Saviour to dissipate all Darkness from
 “ the Eyes of our Souls, that we may clearly know
 “ both God and Man.

* Wherewith *Simplicius* concludes his Commentary upon *Epicurus*, which others attribute to *Jamblicus*, and which is accordingly published at the End of his Works, by the Learned Editor Dr. *Gale*. I shall transcribe and translate it, to shew the Sense those learned Men had.

† Ἰκετίδων σὲ, Δίαστολα ὁ Πάτερ καὶ Ἡμεῖς τὸ οὐκεν λόγον, παν-
 γωνοθῆναι μὲν ἡμῖς τὸ οὐκεν διγνωσκας οὐκ εἰσιάθημεν αὐδοῖ σὺ, σύμπτωξας
 τὸν οὐκεν αὐλοκινήσοις ἡμῖν προς τὰ κάθαρσιν τὸ δόπ τὸ σώματόν μοι τὸ
 ἀλογονικόν ταῦτα μὴ προς τὸ οὐκερέχειν μὴ αρχεῖν αὐτῶν, μὴ μὲν δρυγάνοις
 παχεῖας καὶ τὸ προσόποντα τρέποντα, μὴ προς διόρθωσιν τὸ οὐκεν λόγον,
 μὴ εἴσωσιν αὐτῶν προς τὰ ὄντας ὄντας αὐδοῖ τὸ τὸ αληθεῖας φῶτος. μὴ τὸ
 τρέπετο, τὸ Σωτῆρος ικετίδων ἀφελεῖν τελέων τὸ ἄχλων τὸ Ψυχικῶν ὄμράσταν,
 ἀφετ γηπόσκυμα μὲν (καὶ τὸ Ομηρον) μὴ μὲν θεῖον γέδει μὴ αἰδεσθε.

LI. As *Reason* directed wise and good ~~Men~~ in all Ages to apply themselves to the omnipotent ~~omnipotent~~ ^{omnipotent} Fountain of Life and Wisdom, to assist them in their ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~their~~ ^{their} Enquiries after Truth and Happiness, to ~~convince~~ ^{convince} ~~convince~~ ^{convince} their Understandings, to correct their unwise ~~passions~~ ^{passions}, to teach them their Duty, and enable them ^{to} ~~to~~ ^{to} perform it: There is all the Reason in the World ^{to} ~~to~~ ^{to} believe, that God, the beneficent Creator and ~~so and~~ ^{so and} Power of Souls, the God of the Spirits of all Flesh, to ~~for~~ ^{for} whom all Hearts be open, all Desires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid, would not ~~reject~~ ^{not} ~~reject~~ ^{not} such reasonable Petitions, nor refuse them any ~~aid~~ ^{aid} any aid or Assistance, necessary for their suprem ~~perfection~~ ^{perfection} and Happiness; and by consequence, that he ~~had~~ ^{had} from time to time revealed his Will to Mankind in ~~Heart~~ ^{Heart} ~~Heart~~ ^{Heart} Proportion to their Wants and Capacities, that they ~~might~~ ^{might} know his Will, and serve and obey him ~~as~~ ^{as} they ought to do, and that the ungodly and ~~disobey~~ ^{disobey} ~~disobey~~ ^{disobey} dient might be without Excuse. And that such a ~~Revelation~~ ^{Revelation} ~~Revelation~~ ^{Revelation} of the Will of God was possible, is ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~not~~ ^{not} agreeable to *Reason*, that it was the Foundation of all religious Worship in all Ages and Nations of the World, against which our Adversaries cannot produce one single Exception. And almost every Nation had some Sort of *Code* of their own, which they regarded as the Will of the suprem Being, communicated to wise and good Men, and by them committed to Writing, to be a standing and authentick Rule of Duty to Posterity. As these pretended Revelations are very different, and sometimes contradictory, *Reason* assures us they cannot all be true, but gives us the strongest Probability that ~~some~~ ^{being} of them must be true.

III. The *Christian Code* are the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, but especially the New, which are so far from asserting or proposing any Thing contrary to *Reason*, that we have the highest *Reason* to believe, that it is the *Revelation* of God himself. I shall not enter into the several external Arguments frequently and justly produced to prove its Divinity, such as the Characters of the Writers, the Sublimity of their Stile, the Notoriety of Facts attested by Enemies as well as Friends, its Confirmation by Miracles, but particularly the Accomplishment of many plain and direct Prophecies, not only of Things but also of Persons by Name, with the most minute Circumstances of Time and Place, and as was particularly that of the Destruction of *Babylon*; and in this our Adversaries are principally concerned, as being themselves as justly described *, and as directly foretold so many hundred Years ago, as if the Writers had lived in these Days of ours, and been as well acquainted with their Doctrines and Morals as we are. But omitting all these, I shall chuse rather to insist upon an internal Argument, the force of which may be more easily apprehended, and which is least liable to Objection. If the holy Scriptures were a human Invention, it would easily betray its Author, the Features of the Child would easily discover the Father, corrupt Nature would peep through the thickest Disguise. Could it be supposed that Numbers of Men in different Ages, could resolve each for themselves, without any possible Commerce or Combination with each other, to enter into such a Fraud; the

* 1 Tim. iv. 1. 2 Thess. ii. 2 Pet. ii. 33. Jude 18.

Contradictions and Inconsistencies that must necessarily be found in these separate Performances, when united in one Volume and one System, must easily detect the Forgery, when they came to be examined by the critical, malicious Wit of a *Celsus*, a *Julian*, a *Lucian*, or a *Porphyry*. But suppose there were no such Inconsistencies, or if there were, that they were never discovered; this however must be granted, that the Authors proposed some End in it, some Reward at least for such an elaborate Cheat, and that must be Reputation, Pleasure, Interest, or Power, or altogether. Neither of these Ends could be promoted but by making the System perfectly palatable to Flesh and Blood, and by consequence popular. The very first Principle of corrupt Nature is *Self-love*, or in modern Language, *Self-preservation*; and whoever intended to broach a popular Scheme, and put himself at the Head of a Sect or Party, must be a very weak Politician, if he should propose to effect it by any Set of Principles contradictory to this: Yet this is the very Case of Christianity. It opposes the Love of our corrupt selves, and substitutes the *pure Love of God* in its Stead; instead of gratifying our corrupt Appetites, Lusts, and Passions, it commands us *to mortify them, to deny our selves, to flee youthful Lusts, to abstain from fleshly Lusts which war against the Soul, to cut off a Hand or a Foot, to pluck out an Eye*, if it hinder our Love of God, or oppose the Practice of our Duty; *to take up our Cross, and follow our Redeemer, by resisting even unto Blood, striving against Sin; that thro' much Tribulation we must enter into the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom not of this World, not consisting in the Riches, Power,*

and Honour of earthly Princes; but in the Conquest
of the World, by a divine operative
Faith, whereby alone we are made Heirs of God and
joint heirs with Christ, to an Inheritance incorrup-
table, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in
Heaven for us.

Sec. 1. And as Christianity opposes and contradicts
all corrupt Wills, so does it also mortify and con-
quer the Pride of corrupt Reason; had it been a
miserable human Invention, the Authors of it would
have made it perfectly level to the Capacities of the
vulgar who were to be decoyed into it; they would
not have proposed any Thing necessary to be be-
lieved, which was not obvious to the meanest Capa-
cites; much less would they advise them to renounce
the corrupt Reasonings and blind Philosophy, by
which they became vain in their own Imaginations,
and their foolish Hearts were darkened, professing
themselves (as to this World) they even became
fools in the Sight of God, for the Wisdom of this
world is foolishness with God: Much less would they
assert as the Apostle does, that if any Man would
be wise in this World, he must become a Fool, that he
may be wise, 1 Cor. iii. 18. Men under no better
Guidance than their own corrupt Reason, would ne-
ver have failed against the only Light they had.
Reason in this Sense could be no more employed to
grieve and destroy it self, than Satan could be sup-
posed to cast out Satan; or that any Society or King-
dom would think of supporting it self, by dividing a-
gainst itself: But the Christian Scheme condemns in
plain Words, the Wisdom of this World as Foolishness
with God, telling us that the Wisdom of God which
cometh

cometh from on high, is *Foolishness to corrupt Man*, who is under an actual Incapacity of receiving it, because it is *spiritually discerned*; it presses every where the Necessity of being born again into a new Principle of divine Life and Light, into which we are initiated and ingrafted by Baptism, which is a *Death unto Sin*, a Destruction of the Old *Adam*, which is corrupt Nature; and a *new Birth unto Righteousness*, by which *we are born again, not of Blood nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God*, John i. 13. By Baptism we were supposed to enter into the Participation of the Sufferings and Death of our blessed Lord, that we were to take up our Cross, as he did his; that after we had suffered with him in the Flesh, we might rise with him in the Spirit, and be conducted by him into all the Treasures of divine Light and Truth, *such as Eye bath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor has entered into the Heart of (the natural) Man to conceive*. *The Wisdom of this World* was seated in the Head, by which the Philosophers and Disputers of this World endeavoured to correct and regulate the Motions of the Heart, from whence alone proceed the Issues of Life and Death: But *the Wisdom that cometh from above*, is seated in the Heart, which it purifies, directs, and governs; and from thence sends Life, Light, and Energy into every Faculty and Perception of the Soul. *This preaching of the Cross of Christ, this crucifying the World to us, and us to the World*, as the only narrow Passage to Light, Life, and Immortality, *was to the Jews*, who fancied they had no need of a spiritual Renovation, and minded nothing but external Ordinances, and Signs from

from Heaven, a Stumbling-block ; and to the *Greeks*, whose Heads were full of empty Theory, and barren Speculations, it was Foolishness. And to imagine that a System so contrary to both, could be invented by either, is highly *unreasonable*, not to say, impossible.

LIV. The sublime Doctrines therefore of the Christian Religion, which we call *Mysteries*, are so far from being Marks of Falsehood and Forgery in the Holy Scriptures, that they are rather the strongest Proofs of the divine Authority. The first Rudiments of natural Religion are plain and obvious to the common Sense and *Reason* of Mankind ; our natural Blindness, Weakness, and Inabilities to practise what we know, and to act agreeably to our own *rational Convictions*, is equally plain and certain ; the Necessity therefore of a superior Light and Strength, to shew us the Way, and enable us to walk in it, is a necessary Consequence ; that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are a Revelation given us by God for that End, is highly agreeable to *Reason*. Unprejudiced *Reason* boggles at nothing, till you come to the Article of *Mysteries*, Points that puzzle our Understandings, and are above our Comprehensions, tho' they directly contradict no Principles of *natural Reason* ; and for that single *Reason* to reject the whole System, would be as *unreasonable*, as to say that *Arithmetick*, *Geometry*, *Astronomy* and *Musick* were all a Banter, and Imposition upon Mankind, without any Foundation in the *Reason* and Nature of Things, because tho' the first Rudiments of each were plain and intelligible, yet that no created Understanding

can

can explain and comprehend all the possible Combinations and Powers of Numbers, Sounds, and Proportions, or the Extent of Space and Duration, Infinity, and Eternity. Of all which we may say, as the wise Son of Syrach does of him that made them, *Eccl xlvi. 30. When you glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as you can, for even yet will he far exceed; and when you exalt him, put forth all your Strength, and be not weary, for you can never go far enough. Who hath seen him, that he may tell us, and who can magnify him as he is? There are yet hid greater Things than these be, for we have seen but a few of his Works; for the Lord hath made all Things, and to the godly hath he given Wisdom.*

LV. Well (say our Adversaries) if this be your Rule of Faith and Practice, much good may it do you; it is either a very indifferent one, or requires more than ordinary Abilities to apply it right, since it is so far from reducing Mens Judgments and Opinions to any certain Agreement, that on the contrary, all the several Divisions and Subdivisions of Hereticks and Schismaticks, as well as the Orthodox, shelter themselves under its Authority, and refer themselves to its Decisions, yet are still divided in their Interpretations of them. Every Man's *Reason* tells him, that his own Opinion or Interpretation of Scripture is right: So that the Word of God, which we all agree to be the infallible Guide and Rule of Faith, is brought to patronize and justify the most contradictory Opinion; and is so far from being the Standard of controverted Truth, that it self is obscure and uncertain, and requires rather a Rule to interpret it, than to be it self a Rule for interpreting and

ex-

explaining Difficulties. That this is ~~the~~ Case in Fact is visible and plain; but that in the ~~true~~ Nature of Things it is quite otherwise, will, I hope be easily made appear from these following Considerations, in which the several contending Parties seem to agree.

1. *That all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works,* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

2. That if it be not intelligible, it cannot answer the Ends for which it was given; for that no Man can be taught, reprov'd, corrected, or instructed by what he does not, or cannot understand.

3. That it is inconsistent, either with the Wisdom or Goodness of God, to give us a Revelation, to be a Guide to Truth, and a Rule of Righteousness, which is not easy to be understood by every honest Enquirer.

4. From whence I infer, that the Holy Scriptures are in their own Nature, a plain, easy, intelligible Standard of Truth and Rule of Faith; and that the Difficulties in explaining them are of our own making, arise not from any Obscurity in the Books themselves, but from a natural or a moral Incapacity in the Readers or Interpreters.

LVI. And here a necessary fundamental Rule is to be laid down in the Language of St. Peter. 2 Ep. i. 20.

ΤΟΥΤΟ ΠΡΩΤΟΝ γινώσκοντες,

That no Prophecy of the Scripture (or inspired Writing) is of any private Interpretation; that there is an

an eternal, necessary, immutable, and indissoluble Chain of divine Truth running thro' the whole, the different Parts or Links of which mutually support and explain each other : So that whatever different Senses any Passage may be capable of by the Rules of Grammar, we are to be guided in our Interpretation by the *Analogy of Faith*. Rom. xii. 6. *So that whether we prophecy, (or interpret Prophecy) it must be according to the Analogy of Faith;* and whensoever thro' Levity, Ignorance, or Prejudice, we depart from that, we run into Error and Confusion, and justify Absurdities and Contradictions by the infallible Word of God. Thus for Instance, the presumptuous *Antinomian* from these Words, Rom. iv. 5. *God that justifieth the ungodly,* is sufficiently convinced himself, and proves it from the Words of Scripture, that a wicked Man may be justified, *i. e.* without good Works, or bringing forth Fruits meet for Repentance: On the other Hand, a dejected, despairing Sinner, from that Passage of Exod. xxiii. 7. *I will not justify the wicked,* gives himself up for lost, excluding all Hopes of Pardon and Salvation; whilst the Infidel and Free-thinker laughs at them both for regarding a Book, that confounds and contradicts it self. Whereas were these different Expressions explained by the *Analogy of Faith*, the Appearance of Contradiction would vanish, nor would there be any Difficulty in reconciling this seeming Opposition. Certain it is, that *without Holiness no Man can see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. That therefore no *unholie* Person can be justified (*i. e.* pronounced and considered as just) before God. It is also certain, that Christ died to procure by his Blood Pardon

don for past Sins, and to enable and assist us to *purify our selves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God*, 2 Cor. vii. 1. in which Sense he is properly said to *justify the ungodly*, as he gives them Grace and Power to repent and become acceptable in his Sight. So that the Word *justify* signifies either *to pardon and sanctify, or make a Man righteous that was not so; or to pronounce a Man righteous that really is so*, and thus the Words *תִּשְׁפֹּט* and *δικαιώω* are used by the LXX and Hebrew. Exod. xxiii. 7. 1 Kings viii. 32. 2 Chron. vi. 23.

LVII. The *Reason* and Necessity of this fundamental Rule is short and plain in the following Verse, 2 Pet. i. 21. *For the Prophecy (or inspired Writing) came not in old time by the Will of Man, but Holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* If the Holy Scriptures be the Word of God, dictated by his Spirit, they must not, they cannot be interpreted according to the perverse Reasonings and corrupt Fancies of private Men, so as to contradict, or invalidate in one Place, what is clearly and indispensably revealed in another; but the Spirit and Word of Truth must be its own Interpreter, either by comparing the several Parts which may explain and illustrate each other, or by rational and necessary Deductions according to the *Analogy of Faith*, or by a superior Light and Direction from the Spirit of Prophecy, who alone can explain the *Mysteries of the Kingdom, the deep Things of God.* *For what Man knoweth the Things of a Man, save the Spirit of a Man that is in him, even so the Things of God knoweth no Man, but the Spirit of God.* Now we

we have received not the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the Things that are freely given us of God, which Things also we speak, not in the Words which Man's Wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual Things with spiritual.

LVIII. Here then let us (still keeping a steady Eye upon this necessary fundamental Rule of Interpretation) consider the Holy Scripture, with regard to

1. Its moral Precepts of evangelical Holiness.
2. The Externals of Gospel-Worship, Church-Government, Communion and Discipline.
3. Articles of Faith.

In all which the Holy Scriptures are plain and intelligible to a Man of a sound Head, and an honest Heart, when examined by the *Rules of Reason*, and the *Analogy of Faith*.

1. The moral Duties are so plainly revealed, that no Man of common Sense can plead Ignorance; and I will be bold to assert, that there is nothing to be found throughout the whole in which our Duty is concerned, and to which the Rewards and Penalties of eternal Happiness or Misery are annexed; but what is plain, obvious, and intelligible to every honest Enquirer; and that allowing for the great Variety of different Readings in different MSS. of the Original, and some Errors in the various Translations that have been made of them, yet that out of the very worst of them all, whether MS. or Translation, a clear, uniform, intelligible System of Duty, may be drawn by any Man of common Honesty and Capacity. The Duties of Obedience, Faith, Devotion,

Purity and Holiness towards God; of Justice, Humanity, and Charity towards our Neighbour; of Temperance and Chastity towards our selves, are express'd in so plain and intelligible Words, that no honest Man can be at a Loss to understand his Obligation to perform them. But should a covetous Extortioner, whose Heart was set upon getting an Estate, right or wrong, ever take the Trouble of reading those Holy Books, he would certainly muster up all the formidable Objections, he could think of, to invalidate all those Precepts of Justice, Mercy, and Contempt of the World, that oppose his first Design, or testify against the Ways and Means he uses to accomplish it. He would complain of Interpolations, tell you of different Readings and Pointings in several old MSS, which give the Precept another Turn, and make it capable of a different Interpretation, that may answer the Grammatical Construction of the Precept, and at the same time, not interfere with his Interest or Inclination. Is it possible to express any Precept in plainer Words, than that in *Heb. xiii.*

4. *Marriage is honourable, and the Bed undefiled, but Whore-mongers and Adulterers God will judge?* No Comment can make it plainer, yet do I know several true Protestants, who under the Dominion of an impetuous Lust, and a more imperious Harlot, (pardon me, I should have said *Mistress*) or because they cannot marry with Conveniency, that is, with so great a Fortune as they think they want or deserve, or for some other wise Reason, have employed their whole Stock of Learning and Criticism, to evade and extenuate the Force and Obligation of this plain Precept. They have found in certain prophane Writers,

ters, who are the Standards of the *Greek Purity*, that Πόρνης, and Μοιχός, are very often used promiscuously. Well, and what then! Why from hence, they with great *Reason* of their own infer, that since Μοιχός confessedly signifies an Adulterer, one that invades his Neighbour's Bed, therefore Πόρνης may signify the same; and so he that is only guilty of simple Fornication, may escape the Penalty of the Statute. But what egregious Trifling is this! Let it be owned that the Words are sometimes promiscuously applied to the same Person: I fear there may be a worse Reason given for it than they imagine, *viz.* That he who is guilty of one, seldom makes much scruple to be guilty of the other. But would he honestly know the Meaning and Extent of the Precept, let him consider the Apostle recommending *Marriage* as an honourable State, ordained and sanctified by God, for the Propagation of Mankind; and the restraining those promiscuous Mixtures, that would certainly follow, from a general and unlimited Use of the two Sexes, which is abominable to God, and which he will not fail to punish severely; *i. e.* in plain *English*, chaste Marriage is honourable, but your Commerce with the Ladies without it, however fashionable and gallant, is a damnable Sin. Let us illustrate this by comparing it with any of our Acts of Parliament, as that against Simony, Bribery in Elections, defrauding the King of his Customs. Let us suppose, that the Legislature intended *bonâ fide* to make the Act so effectual, that it should actually prevent the Abuses and Corruptions it was intended to reform; and that they had expressed it in the plainest Terms that could be thought of. Can it

now

now be conceived, that any Man who can read and understand the Language of his Country, can be at a Loss to know the Intention of the Legislature, the plain Sense and Meaning of the Act, and his own Obligation to obey and submit to it? No surely; but yet if any Man without attending to the Guilt of transgressing them, in point of Conscience, were resolved for his Interest to break thro' all or either of them; he would soon find certain nice Distinctions, quibbles about the different Meanings of Words, that should seem, at least, to give the whole an ambiguous Turn. And if he should be indicted in a Court of Justice, upon either of those Statutes, a large Fee would have the same Influence on the Understanding of the Council, as his View of Interest had upon his own. Words should be tortured and perverted from their natural and obvious Signification; the Construction and Pointing of Sentences, should be examined with an hypercritical Nicety; in short, no Artifice, no Chicane, should be omitted; What to do? To discover the Truth? By no Means, but to obscure, to perplex, to pervert it, and in a Word, to reconcile their Duty to their Interest, and to stifle that Evidence that thwarts their Inclinations. The Parallel is too obvious to need any Application.

LIX. As for other Articles relating to Ecclesiastical Authority, Communion, Government and Discipline, which at this Day divide the Christian World, even those who are agreed in other Articles of Faith and Practice; as they are not so absolutely necessary to be known by every private Christian, so neither are they so plain and obvious as the moral Duties, which every

ry Man is indispensably obliged to know and practise ; yet even these to any honest Man, that is willing and able to enquire, and can pursue an easy natural Chain of *Reasoning*, are sufficiently plain and evident. Let us suppose a Person free from any Prejudices of Education, Interest, or Party, unsettled in his Sentiments, and therefore desirous to enquire carefully and sincerely into the true State of these Questions, in order to form his Judgment, and direct his Practice ; we must suppose him qualified to understand the Originals, able to fix and determine the precise Signification of certain Technical Words, which, in different Relations and Connections, are various, extensive, and ambiguous, such are the Words, Ἐκκλησία, Ἐπίσκοπος, Πρεσβύτερος, &c. and to affix such Ideas to them, as the Nature of the Subject requires, and is consistent with the avowed Design of the Writer. He is next of all to compare the different Reasonings that may occur in these Writers, which may in a good measure help to fix their Sentiments, with regard to the Signification of such Words and Phrases, as are in their own Nature ambiguous. He is next of all to consider the constant Practice of the Age, in which those Writers lived (and by comparing several Facts together, he may be able to determine the Use of certain Forms of Speech, which would be otherwise obscure and unintelligible) and the constant Practice and Traditions of succeeding times; and from a fair and impartial Consideration of these Particulars, I will venture to affirm, that the Disputes about *Church-Government*, *Infant-Baptism*, with several other controverted Points, may be easily determined by candid and impartial Men.

LX.

LX. Let us here make a few cursory Reflections only on *Church-Government*. That there must be Government in a Church, is demonstrable from *Reason*, because it is impossible it should subsist without it. Where all are to command and none to obey, there can be no regular Society, but a confused Rabble. It is therefore contrary to *Reason*, to suppose, that the God of *Wisdom* and *Order* would institute a Society without Government; to assert this would be to make God not the *Author of Peace*, but of *Confusion in all the Churches of the Saints*, *1 Cor. xiv. 33*. Where St. *Paul* assures us it is his Will, that *all Things be done decently and in order*, *1 Cor. xiv. 40*. But what Decency, what Order can there be without Government? The supreme Governor is *Jesus Christ*, who is the Ruler and *Head of his Church, which he hath purchased with his Blood*, *Acts xx. 28*. His Authority before his Ascension he delegated to certain Persons, *John xx. 21*. whom he sent into all the *World, with the same Power to collect and govern the Church which himself had received from the Father*: This Power was not given to all the Faithful; if it were, all would be Governors, and there would be none to be governed, which would be absurd and *unreasonable*. St. *Paul* claims this Authority, and calls it the *Authority which the Lord hath given him*, *2 Cor. x. 8*. The Author to the *Hebrews* commands them to obey them that have the *Rule over them, and submit themselves*, *Heb. xiii. 17*. And that this Obedience regards spiritual Governors is apparent from the following Words, for *they watch for your Souls, as they that must give account*. The same Authority is claimed by St. *Ignatius*

tius in his Ep. to the *Trallians*; by St. *Cyprian* very frequently. In short, nothing is plainer in History than that the Christian Church, before ever it had any supreme Magistrate in its Communion, for above three Centuries was actually governed by its Pastors, and has continued to be so ever since in the greatest part of Christendom. Nor do these Ecclesiastical Governors receive their Authority from the People, for how can they give what they have not themselves? The supreme Authority is vested in Christ, and therefore *no Man can take this Honour to himself*, but he that is called of God, as was *Aaron*, Heb. v. 4. And this St. *Paul* expressly declares to the Elders of *Ephesus*, *Take heed to your selves, and to all the Flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you Overseers*, Acts xx. 28. It is true indeed, the Apostles did once say to the Multitude of Disciples, *Acts* vi. 3. *Look ye out among you seven Men of honest Report full of the Holy Ghost, and of Wisdom*; but then it follows, *whom WE may appoint over this Busines*. So that however the People chose them, the Apostles only appointed them, and by virtue of Christ's Commission, committed an Authority to them; and besides, the People attempted not to chuse and present them, till they had the Apostle's Leave to do it. For this was no right which the Multitude could challenge to themselves, as is plain from the Practice of *Paul* and *Barnabas*, who *ordained Elders in every Church*, *Acts* xiv. 23. without the People's electing them; and *Titus* was left in *Crete* to *ordain Elders* in every City, which had been perfectly needless, if the People had Authority to elect and ordain them for themselves. And that this was the Authority of

Diocesan Episcopacy, there is the highest Reason to believe, it having been the same Form of Government that has continued in the Christian Church ever since, as has been irrefragably proved by the Learned Dr. Maurice, in his excellent *Defence of Diocesan Episcopacy* against *Clarkson*, to which I refer the inquisitive and judicious Reader. This is putting the Case upon a true Foot of *Reason*, weighing all the Evidence on both Sides of the Question, and judging accordingly. Such a Judgment so formed, may be properly called *private Judgment*, it being the Result of the Enquiries and Reasonings of a *private Person*, who was able and willing to search into the Foundation of certain Usages and Customs, established by Authority: But does by no means imply, that he, who for want of this impartial Examination, under strong Prejudices of Pride, Envy, Revenge, &c. shall determine on the wrong Side of the Question, is to be justified by such *private Judgment*; or to be excus'd for acting erroneously on such erroneous Judgment. For the Truth of Things is always immutably the same; and though 999 in 1000 should be mistaken in their Judgments about it, yet will not their Mistakes alter the Nature of Truth, nor destroy those necessary Relations that are betwixt the several Ideas of Things. Thus a Demonstration in Mathematicks or Algebra, must be formed upon a right Understanding of the several Parts or Numbers, and the Proportion they bear to each other; which, whoever does not understand, cannot apprehend the force of it; yet will not his Misapprehension alter the Truth of the Problem, or the necessary Relation of the several Parts and Numbers on which

which it is formed. And if such a one should pretend to justify his Errors by impertinent *Reasons* of his own, and insist upon his Right of thinking freely, and judging for himself, he must be contemptible to every Man of Learning, Modesty, and Judgment; for at this rate, there would be no such Thing as positive Truth in any Thing, but all must be resolved into the Whim and Caprice of Fools and Madmen.

LXI. And as the Bulk of private Christians are not qualified to enter into such Enquiries as these, for want of Leisure and Abilities to examine fairly, and judge accordingly, it would not be Bigotry, or slavish Subjection of such Mens Understandings, to submit their *Reason* to the Decision and Determinations of others, whose Skill, Abilities, and Method of Study has made them better able to judge of such disputable Matters. This is the way we are all apt to take in the Concerns of our Health and Property. Should a sick Man send for a Physician, and yet refuse to submit to his Prescriptions, because he cannot account for the Natures and Virtues of each Drug or Simple, the *Reason* of their Composition, and, the specifick Operation of each in his Case; he would certainly die unpitied, as an ignorant, conceited, obstinate Blockhead. So in a Case of Law, where a Man's Estate was in Danger, upon some intricate Perplexities in his Title, or some Omission in his Deeds of Conveyance, would not he be a great Fool, who would not take the Advice of a Lawyer, whose Ability and Integrity he had no Reason to suspect, because he could not apprehend the direct Tendency of every Step or Motion made for his Security? Yet this is the present Case of Thousands, in the more

important Concerns of Religion ; they first ignorantly take up Principles, which they resolve obstinately to defend. If they meet with a Man, able and willing to set them right, who enters into the Nature of Things, shews them the Connexion of Ideas, and the just Inferences arising from them ; they retire into their Works, intrench themselves in their own Stupidity, which they call the Dictates of *Reason* and *Conscience*, and from which they resolve never to recede.

LXII. The present popular Advocates for the Liberty of private Judgment, by which they make their Court to the People, know as well as we how incapable they are of forming such a Judgment, or even of understanding the very Terms of the Question in Debate : But Liberty has always been the stale Pretence to seduce People into Resistance and Opposition to the Civil, as well as the Ecclesiastical Authority ; and when once they have withdrawn them from the Duty and Regard, they owe to their proper Superiors, and spirited them up to judge for themselves, which they are sure they can never do, they look upon them all as listed Men, who from that Moment have Life and Limb, Body and Soul at their Service. And he that bids these poor Creatures think for themselves, means in effect no more than this,

“ Gentlemen, I have a Scheme in my Head to raise
 “ my Credit and my Fortune, if I could but get the
 “ Assistance of a Number of such honest Friends as
 “ you are, to put it in Execution. I know you are
 “ under certain superstitious Regards to Conscience,
 “ Religion, the Direction and Advice of your spiritual
 “ Guides, who pretend to fetter your Understand-
 “ ings,

" ings, and your Wills, and to lead you blind-fold
 " wherever they please; but I tell you, Gentlemen,
 " you are as good Men as they, your Reason is as
 " good as theirs, take my Advice therefore, behave
 " your selves like free Men, think for your selves, and
 " follow me in the glorious Cause of Liberty and In-
 " dependency." This was the old Wheedle that the
 Devil used to our first Parents in Paradise, and this
 is the Decoy of every recruiting Sergeant at a Coun-
 try-Fair. *Liberty and Deliverance from unreasonable Fathers and Mothers, Tyrannical Masters, and cruel Mistresses*, draws more into the Service, than
 either the Advance Guinea, or the Glitter of regi-
 mental Ornaments. And all quickly find by sad Ex-
 perience, that the glorious Pretence of Liberty was
 only a gilded Bait to draw them into Slavery and Mi-
 sery, and that their Deliverers from Tyranny are their
 greatest Tyrants; in a Word, there is in the Nature
 of Things an Expediency, a Necessity that the Bulk
 of Mankind should submit their Understandings as
 well as their Wills to the Direction of others, and he
 that tells them otherwise, means nothing else but to
 seduce them from the just Regard they owe to their
 proper Superiors, and make them the Tools of his
 own Avarice or Ambition. There are other Points
 of a more abstracted, speculative Nature, such are
 the Doctrines of *Justification, Reprobation, Prede-
 stination, Schism, &c.* which properly come within
 the Verge and Province of *Reason*; and notwithstanding
 the many Volumes written *pro and con*, may by
 a Person of right *Reason*, and an honest Heart, be ve-
 ry easily and plainly accounted for, by comparing the
 various Meanings of the different Words, as found in
 different

different Places of Scripture, and applied to different Purposes, and pursuing the Thread of reasoning the holy Author uses in the Proof of it, or his arguing from it. Thereby he will soon perceive certain Ideas affixed in different Respect to the same Words, some of which are entirely irreconcileable in the Nature of Things, when viewed in another Light, and therefore cannot be true in this: So that for instance, that Notion of Justification, that implies any Thing contrary to the Goodness and Justice of God, the Necessity of real Holiness, *without which no Man shall see the Lord*; or contradicts any other plain Truth of natural or revealed Religion, cannot be true. On the contrary, that Notion which reconciles all these seeming Contradictions, that neither encourages a dead, unactive Faith, nor a vain Presumption of our meritorious good Works; that reconciles by a clear Connexion of Ideas the Satisfaction of our blessed Saviour, with the Necessity of working out our own Salvation; that Notion cannot be false.

LXIII. The Nature and Guilt of Schism is yet plainer to be understood, as depending on fewer and more simple Ideas; so that a moderate Share of Understanding, with due Attention, Sincerity and Ingenuity, cannot fail to give a Man a right Notion of it: And did I not know the monstrous Artifice and Assurance of some of the Leaders, and the more than superstitious Credulity of the Herd, I should be as much surprized at the several Separations from the Church of *England*, as I should be to see a whole Nation at Loggerheads, upon the Question whether a *Triangle had three Sides, or three Corners*; and yet they all talk gravely of their *Reason*, and are never

at

at a Loss for *Reasons*, (such as they are) to justify their Separation. These consist of a certain Cant, an odd Form of incoherent Words uttered with a formal Countenance, which are handed thro' the Croud by a few who are in the Direction of the Party; who most certainly act upon *Reasons*, but such as they dare not own to the abused Multitude. The Beginnings of our Schisms are too recent, and the Causes and Management of them too well known to be either concealed or disguised. The many Facts collected by the Author of *Foxes and Firebrands*, and others of the same Nature, as certainly tho' not so publickly known, are the Master-Key to the whole Mystery. They were founded in the Policy of the Popish Emissaries, and the Simplicity of ignorant Enthusiasts, who having been first fired with a blind red-hot Zeal against that detestable old Woman, *the Whore of Babylon*, were led by the mere Force of empty Sounds artfully applied, into the most absurd Notions, and unreasonable Practices. There was, for Instance, and still is a natural Malignity in the Words *Popery*, *Popish*, *Anti-christian*, *the Mass*, &c. the Sound of them implies *Error*, *Confusion*, *Tyranny*, *the Devil and all his Works*. On the other hand, there is a *Soul-saving Sweetness*, a native Benignity in the Words *Protestant Religion*, *Gospel-Ordinances*, *preaching the Gospel*, *Moderation*, *Edification*, &c. by a right Application of which, the Populace were and still are as absolutely led and directed, as any Piece of Machinery upon Mr. Powel's *Theatre*. Words of such Importance alarm and awaken into a Posture of Opposition or Defence; the Impressions they make are too strong to bear Reflexion, they anticipate

pate the Use of *Reason*. Who ever saw the young Gentry in any Street of this great Town call a Council, and enter into serious Debates, when the formidable Cry of a *mad Dog* was given? They take the Alarm at once; *Jamque faces & saxa volant* — in Defence of their Lives and Liberty. On the other hand, the very *Eccbo* of those *Evangelical* Words *Protestant, Moderation, Charity, Sincerity, &c.* is supposed to shed a blessed Influence where-ever they are applied. There is no Scheme so unchristian, no Design so pernicious, no Project so vile, but is sanctified by an artful Disposition of them in the several Parts and Incidents of the Scheme; so that nothing can be meant or said or done amiss, where all or either of these are in View. There was at first so little Appearance of *Reason* or *common Sense* in their Apologies for their Separation, that K. *James I.* justly and wittily observed, that a *Puritan* (the general Name at that time for all Separatists) *was nothing but a Protestant frightened out of his Wits*: But as they were afterwards found to be rare Tools for Politicians to work with, the best Heads and Pens were employed to put the best Varnish they could upon the Cause, in order to establish a Party to be thrown into the Balance whenever *Reasons of State* should make it necessary. And when the Heads and Leaders of the Party found themselves necessary to a *Ministry*, they play'd their Cards so wisely as to be paid for their Labour and Service, and whilst both Parties find their Account in it, they will never want something to say in Defence of themselves, tho' they have been challenged by almost all the Writers upon that Head to reconcile it to *Reason or Christianity*, as they are

are particularly by one of the best and most impartial in that Controversy, the present Rt. Rev. Bp. of *Sarum*, in his Reasonableness of Conformity. His Reasonings are so close and nervous, that I cannot help transcribing a Passage or two, which I always read with Pleasure, p. 59. He puts the Case of imposing Ceremonies in as strong a Light as possible, and supposes that the Bishops abuse their Authority. *Even then* (says he, p. 83.) *I do not think a Separation can be justified, because a Separation is of a great deal worse Consequence than a Compliance with Authority in what had better never have been commanded.* The Governor may transgress his Duty in commanding, and yet I may be under an Obligation to obey, and the Pretence of witnessing against his Impositions, is not of half so much force, as the witnessing against publick Disturbance and Disorder; therefore (he proceeds) the Bishops ought still to assert that Authority they are entrusted with, they should testify against unwarrantable Separation, they should give what Check they can to those Principles, that have brought such Confusion and Disorder into this Church and Nation, and should resist the Designs of evil Men, who, as they may well judge, make use of the Ignorance of some honest Christians to strike at our very Root and Foundation. He concludes, *I wish you would consider your own Practice, and see whether you can easily reconcile it to the Principle we are now upon, (viz. not communicating with imperfect Churches) and look upon the Nature and Tendency of this Principle, and see if you can easily reconcile it to REASON and CHRISTIANITY, p. 138.* Their Case, in short, is just the same

with theirs who are Possessors of sacrilegious Estates; they both satisfy themselves with the Protection of the Law, without attending to the Guilt and Vengeance that certainly attend them. Upon the whole, they make as unreasonable Pretences to *Reason* and *Freedom of Thought*, as their Brethren the *Free-thinkers*. And I must take the Liberty to say, that till they are able to prove by a clear and evident Chain of *Reason*, that the Terms of Communion with the Church of *England* are unreasonable and sinful, they must not take it ill to be told, that they are guilty of Schism, or a causeless Separation from a sound Branch of the Catholick Church.

LXIV. Let us in the next Place take a short View of the *Mysteries* of Religion, which are properly called *Articles of Faith*; and here our *Reason* directed by the *Analogy of Scripture*, which is the *Rule of Faith*, will be of excellent Use to us. We have already seen that none of them are contrary to *Reason*, as Things are that imply Contradictions or Absurdities, and that possibly they may be true. As particularly that Article of the proper and eternal Divinity of the Son of God, which at present gives so great Offence to the Patrons of *Reason*. Let it be supposed for Argument's Sake (though it be really a most unreasonable Supposition) that the Scripture Authorities on both Sides of the Question were equal in Weight and Number, and by consequence that the Mind were perfectly undetermined either Way. In such a Case *Reason* would weigh and compare these several Testimonies with other collateral Ones, and consider how they agree with the *Analogy of Faith*, and the *Oeconomy of Man's Redemption*.

tion, and be sure that no absurd Consequences flow from them. It would consider Mankind in their fallen State as *spiritually* dead in Trespasses and Sins, (which is the Language of Scripture in innumerable Places) without the least Spark of divine Life, or any natural Possibility of recovering it, and by consequence that they could no more restore themselves than they could at first create themselves. That the united Powers of all the Creatures could not produce either *Light* or *Life*; only he that at first produced Light out of Darkness, who breathed into Man the Breath of Life, and impressed his own divine Image upon him, could restore it to him when he had lost it, by quickening and raising him from the Dead, by his own Spirit; and that no one could raise the Dead, or give Life, but the Author of Life and Being, even *JEHOVAH*, the Lord God omnipotent, whose sole Prerogative it is *to kill and to make alive*, 1 Sam. ii. 6. It would consider whether it were in the Power of any Creature to make Agreement with God for the Ransom of the whole human Species, whether any Thing less than infinite could satisfy the Justice of an infinite God; and that therefore there is no manner of Absurdity, in supposing (as the Catholick Church teaches) that the Son of God, who is *God blessed for evermore*, the second Person in the glorious and ever blessed Trinity, beheld with Compassion his Apostate ruined Creatures, and left the Habitation of his Glory to take our Nature upon him, and by the All-sufficient Sacrifice of himself to make an Attонement for our Sins, and satisfy the offended Justice of God, to purge us from our Pollutions, and by the omnipotent Work-

ings of his Spirit, to raise us from the Death of Sin to the Life of Righteousness; that by thus assuming our human Nature, he took Possession of it, to assure us that he had, and would deliver it from the Bondage of Sin and Satan, that he would abolish the Curse that had overspread the whole Species, and become the Head and Spring of a new, divine, and spiritual Life to all that would receive him; so that as in *Adam*, (who was Υψηλὸς ἡστάτης) all died, so in Christ (who is Πλευραὶ οὐρανοῦ) all should be made alive. On the other hand, what can be more contrary to *Reason* than to say, as the *Socinians* do, that the Son of God has all the *divine Attributes* without the *divine Nature*: The Father (they say) hath communicated *his own Wisdom, his own Power, his own Honour, his own Glory*, but not *his own Essence*; but can any Thing be more contrary to *Reason*, than that these Attributes, which themselves acknowledge to be truly and properly divine, should be actually separated from the *divine Substance*; seeing they also acknowledge that *there is nothing in God, that is not God himself*; and that his Attributes can only in the Conception of the Mind be distinguish'd from his *Essence*? Is it not more agreeable to *Reason* to conceive, that as the Father has communicated his *Properties or Attributes*, he has also communicated his *Essence*? For as much as we cannot conceive how they should be actually divided, for his *Attributes and Nature* are really one, and *God's Wisdom, Power, Presence, and Glory*, are nothing *really but himself*.

LXV. Thus it is, if we consider the *Nature of God*; but it appears yet more *unreasonable*, if we con-

consider the Nature of a Creature, whom they would make the Subject of these divine Attributes. How contrary to *Reason* is it, that a *created Being*, as they make our Saviour to be, should be *as wise, as powerful* as God, be *omnipresent* and *omnipotent*, have the *same Worship* and the *same Glory* as God, and yet be still a *Creature*? In short, to conceive Activity beyond the proper Sphere of the Agent, Properties and Attributes without a capable Subject, is as contrary to *Reason*, as to imagine *Reason* and Religion in a *Brute*, with all the Attributes of the *human Nature*, and yet be a *Brute* still. It would be easy to enlarge upon this and other Articles in the same manner, and to shew that *Reason* is so far from being against us, that the Catholick Doctrine is in every Respect highly *reasonable*; but as my Design is only to give general Hints, I shall leave it to my Readers to apply them to Particulars.

LXVI. To Doctrines so clearly revealed, and so agreeable to *Reason*, every Opposition must be criminal; if *false Prophets* and *false Teachers* arise among us, as St. Peter foretold there should, who *should deny the Lord that bought them*, 2 Ep. ii. 1. They must not deceive us into an Opinion, that these are *innocent Errors*, trifling Mistakes about Matters of *mere Speculation*, in which the Favour of God and our eternal Interest are not at all, or very remotely concerned; the Apostle calls these perverse Oppositions *ψεύσεις ἀπωλείας*, *damnable Heresies* (as we translate it) and that the Preachers and Defenders of such Doctrine, bring upon themselves *ταχινὴν ἀπωλείαν*, *swift Destruction*. For it is directly denying the Truth and Veracity of God, 1 John v.

10, 11. *He that believeth not God, bath made him a Liar, because he believeth not the Record that God gave of his Son, and this is the Record that God bath given to us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son. He that bath the Son, bath Life, and he that bath not the Son of God, bath not Life.* But (say these Gentlemen) is it consistent with Justice, Goodness, or common Sense to damn a Man for thinking? A Man must think of all Things as they appear to him, and cannot do otherwise, if a Thing appear to him to be false, he cannot believe it to be true. Certain it is, that if we mistake for want of Abilities or Means to discover the Truth, if our Ignorance be invincible; he that made us and knows our Frame, who sees the inward Recesses of our Souls, and who alone can judge of the Sincerity of our Hearts in the Pursuit of Truth, will not condemn us: But if thro' Pride, Ambition, Covetousnes, or Malice, or any other criminal Bias of the Soul, we fall into Error, our Ignorance is culpable, our Errors will be criminal, and we shall be severely and justly accountable for them. We have a sad and remarkable Example of this in the Case of *Simon Magus*, Acts viii. 18. *When he saw that by the laying on of the Hands of the Apostles the Holy Ghost was given; he offered them Money, saying, give me also this Power, that on whomsoever I lay my Hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.* But Peter said, *thy Money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the Gift of God may be purchased for Money, thou hast neither Part nor Lot in this Matter, for thy Heart is not right in the Sight of God; repent therefore of this thy Wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the Thoughts of*

of thy Heart may be forgiven thee. This Wretch was certainly and fully persuaded within himself, that the Gift of God might be purchased for Money, otherwise he was too good a Manager to part with his ready Money, without expecting a valuable Consideration; and this is the Wickedness St. Peter charges him with, and bids him repent of. *His very Thoughts* were criminal, and he is therefore advised to pray God that these *guilty erroneous Thoughts*, if possible, might be forgiven him. Our modern Advocates for the Innocence of Error, would have been apt to pronounce this an uncharitable and unjust Sentence: But St. Peter, who knew the Heart of this spiritual Stockjobber, saw how corrupt and wicked it was, that it was full of Vain-glory, Ambition and Covetousness, that *thee* were the natural and moral Causes of that intellectual Blindness he laboured under, and therefore charges it upon him as his Crime; *I perceive* (says he) *that thou art still in the Gall of Bitterness and Bond of Iniquity*. Errors in Judgment then may be sinful, and, in Matters of Religion, are oftner so than we are aware of; unless you will say that the Knowledge of Truth, and of the Will of God revealed in Scripture, is not necessary, and that therefore God never intended we should know it, which is absurd and ridiculous; or else that this Revelation is so dark and obscure, that it is absolutely impossible to understand it, *i. e.* either that Almighty God gave such a Revelation as he never intended should be understood, or else gave it in such a Manner, as that it is impossible to understand it, which is little better than Blasphemy.

LXVII. Nor will it avail them any Thing, to insist upon their *Sincerity*, a Plea that may with as much Propriety be urged in defence of Treason or Horse-stealing, as of Heresy or Schism. I have often wondred what *Reason* could be given, for scatter-ing such a crude indigested Notion among the Mul-titude, as that *Sincerity* was the chief, if not the only Qualification for Acceptance with God. Be it so. But is there but one possible Meaning to be affix'd to that Word? Is the Word never used but in one Sense? If it be, such a Notion ought to have been treated in the most exact and critical Manner; the Word should have been carefully explained, its vari-ous Uses and Abuses discovered, before so great a Weight should be laid upon it, which perhaps it could not be able to bear. The common and popu-lar Notion of *Sincerity* is a plain, open, and undis-guised Behaviour; and a *sincere* Man is one that says what he thinks, or means what he says; but if in this Sense of the Word, a Man should speak Peace to his Conscience, and be perfectly satisfied within him-self, for professing openly to the World, what he really and *sincerely* believes, be it in its own Nature true or false; at that rate there would be no such Thing as positive Truth in the Gospel; or if there be, it is not necessary to Salvation, that it should be known. There is, at this Rate, no necessary Connexi-on betwixt evangelical Truth and evangelical Holiness: So that had there been *no Scripture given by Inspiration of God, a Man might have been perfect and thoroughly furnished to all good Works*: In this Respect, indeed, there may be some Shadow of Truth; *for had no Law been given, there could have been*

been no Transgression ; and they that were without Law, would have been judged without Law : That is, God is not so austere a Master to reap where he has not sown, nor to gather where he has not strawed. But what have we to do to judge them that are without, those that are without God judgeth ? To his infinite and uncovenanted Mercies we leave them. But our Case is quite different : We have a clear and plain Revelation of the Will of God, a regular, uniform, coherent System of Truth and Doctrines, *a form of sound Words, even that Faith which was once delivered to the Saints* ; every Tittle and Article of which is eternally and immutably true, and bears a necessary Relation to our Sanctification and Salvation. *This Truth as it is in Jesus Christ, this sincere Milk of the Word, is to feed and nourish us to eternal Life; this Truth is to make us free, then (and not else) are we free indeed; this sacred Depositum was lodged in the Church, as an invaluable Treasure, not to be suppressed, embezzled, or adulterated.* For this Reason St. Paul commands *Titus, Ch. ii. ¶ 7.* to shew in his Doctrine, Sincerity, *Αφθαρτίας, Uncorruptness, not handling the Word of God deceitfully;* the same which he professes to have practised himself, *2 Cor. ii. 17. For we are not as many who corrupt the Word of God, (καπνλαύοντες τὸν λόγον τῆς θεᾶς) but as of Sincerity, but as of God, in the Sight of God, speak we in Christ.*

LXVIII. But if by Sincerity, these Gentlemen mean as the Holy Scriptures do, a natural Rectitude of Heart and Will, an earnest Desire to know the Will of God and practise it, a Freedom from vicious Habits and Prejudices, an impartial honest Search

after Truth, without sinister Views and By-designs, without Prospects of Honours, Applause, or Vain-glory, or any other End, than the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls; I entirely agree with them, that Sincerity is *the great, yea, the only* Foundation of Truth, Obedience, Holiness, and Acceptance with God. This is the *Αρθαροια, Ασεια, Ειληρεια* mentioned in Scripture; this is what our blessed Lord calls *the single Eye*, and pronounces upon it, that if *our Eye be single, our whole Body shall be full of Light.*

Sincerum est nisi vas, quodcumque infundis, acescit.

If there be any foul Tincture in our Hearts, it will communicate itself to every Perception of the Soul, and like a foul Stomach, will turn the best Nourishment into Corruption; but if the Heart be clean, and a Man be in this Sense of the Word sincere, if he search the Holy Scriptures with Industry and Humility, with an earnest and impartial Desire to know and practise his Duty, if he continue instant in Prayer to God for the Direction and Assistance of his Holy Spirit, if he scrupulously abstain from every Appearance of Evil, and continue stedfast and immovable in the Work of the Lord, (and upon no other Terms can he be called *a sincere Man*) then he has the Assurance of God himself, who cannot lye, that *the Spirit of Truth shall conduct and lead him into all Truth*, John xvi. 13. This is that Comforter, which our Lord promises, John xiv. 15, 16, 17. *If ye love me, keep my Commandments, and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit*

*rit of Truth whom the World cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you: Such a Man cannot stumble, nor fall into any hurtful Error, because he walketh in the Day, and seeth the Light of the World. But if a Man walk in the Night, he stumbleth, because there is no Light in him, John xi. 9, 10. If any Man will do the Will of God, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, John vii. 17. Nor shall any Man be able by the most cunning Sophistry, to seduce or destroy these sincere Lovers of Truth, and Servants of God: They are the faithful Flock of Jesus Christ, the good Shepherd of Souls. John x. 27, 28, 29, *My Sheep hear my Voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal Life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my Hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's Hand.* And whilst they are thus united in and to the Spirit of Truth, if they should happen to differ or mistake in less Matters, *God shall reveal even those Things to them, Phil. iii. 15.* that they may not be tempted to run into Schism and Division, but keep the *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.**

LXIX. But what has the proud, the prophanie, the ambitious, or the covetous Man to do with Truth? Their Busines is to be great, rich, and honourable in the World; by such as these Truth itself is no otherwise regarded, than as it may be subservient to those important Ends; and if perhaps they should talk of it, and enquire about it, as Pi-

late did of our *Blessed Lord*, John xviii. 38. Yet like him too, without staying for an Answer, they turn their Backs upon him that would inform them. If these Men profess Christianity, it is only because their Betters do it, and there is something to be got by it. Do they enter into the Service of the Church? It is only to wear its Honours, and share its Revenues. An ambitious or covetous Clergyman is his own Idol, and makes his own Interest the sole Measure and Standard of the Truth of any Doctrine, or the Goodness of any Person or Action, and by insensible Degrees he forms to himself such a Scheme of Doctrine and Manners, as may visibly consist with his predominant Propension; he assumes a soft agreeable Air of Conversation, is obsequious and complaisant, especially to his Superiors, and takes care to say nothing that shall shock or disoblige them, especially if good Preferment, a warm Deanry, or a fat Bishoprick be in View. This obliges him to soften and qualify several severe Precepts of the Gospel, and to talk affectionately of Moderation, good Manners, &c. when his Conscience calls upon him to oppose their Prophaneness, and rebuke their Vices. If he finds the Current of the Times run visibly into some fashionable epidemical Error, he either strikes in with it, or takes care to speak diffidently, or as he calls it, modestly about it; and this he may do so long, as at last to lose the Truth, and be confirmed in Error; As a Man may tell a Lye so long, till at last he believes it to be true. But will his sincere Belief, that what he says is true, make it cease to be a Lye? Will any Man's sincere Belief that Error is Truth, change the Nature of Things,

or

or alter that necessary Relation there is between real Truth and real Holiness, *without which no Man shall see God?* In short, let the wrong Byass be what it will, Vanity or Singularity, Ambition or Covetousness, or whatsoever is not founded in *the absolute pure Love of God and his Truth*, it spreads Darknes and Blindnes over the Soul, so that the Light of God (in which alone we see Light) cannot enter. Let us then for God's sake hear no more tragical Outcries about *the Difficulties and Discouragements, that attend the Study of the Holy Scriptures*, no more popular Declamations against Orthodox Tyranny, and Protestant Inquisitions, against the critical Enquiries of learned, humble, and pious Commentators upon Scripture. Tell us not of 2, or 20, or 2000 great and good Men, who with all the necessary Qualifications, have yet studied themselves into Heresy, or the Suspicion of it, which they call, quite as bad; yea, rather let God be true, and every Man a Lyar. He has promised his Holy Spirit to guide the sincere Lover of Truth, into all necessary Truths, and to protect him from all hurtful Errors; and if we fall into Error, nevertheless the Foundation of God standeth sure, 2 Tim. ii. 19. he continueth faithful, but we deceive ourselves. St. Peter tells us, 2 Ep. iii. 16, That *the Unlearned and Unstable wrest the Scriptures to their own Destruction*: And that Man must certainly be unlearned in spiritual Things, who knows not *the first and great Commandment*, which is the *Love of God*. And he whose Heart is principally set upon the World, with a secondary, subservient, oblique Regard to God and Religion, whom St. James calls

calls αὐγὴ διψυχος, Ch. i. § 8. is pronounced by the same Apostle to be *unstable* in all his Ways. *The Love of God* which is ever attended with Humility, fixes the Soul and keeps it steady, as solid Foundations do a Building, or deep Roots a Tree; in which Sense the Apostle mentions our *being rooted and grounded in Love*, Eph. iii. 17. and if such Men wrest the Scriptures, and make them patronize any Errors in Doctrine or Practice, how sincere soever they may fancy themselves to be in drawing Conclusions, (and so deceitful is the Heart of Man, that Numbers have been deceived by it) yet they do it to their own Destruction.

LXX. Thus have I taken a short View of this popular Word *Reason*, which makes so much Noise, and does so much hurt in the Mouths of empty Pretenders to it. I have endeavour'd to shew that the Doctrines of Christianity are so far from being contrary to it, that they are grounded upon the best and truest *Reason*; and that the human *Reason* or Understanding, directed by the Word of God and the Analogy of Faith, will bring us to a *rational and historical Faith*, or Belief of the sublimest Doctrines of the Christian Religion, so far as they may be apprehended by Analogy, and expressed by Metaphor, which is all that the *rational or natural Man* can do. But as for the *Things of God*, (as they are in themselves) *the Mysteries of the Kingdom*, the deep *Things of the Spirit of God*, the *natural Man* receiveth them not; for they are *Foolishness to him, nor can be know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, 1 Cor. ii. 14. But (says one) who is this ψυχικος, whom you call the *rational or natural Man*?

Man? And why, or how is he uncapable of the true Knowledge of God and spiritual Things? St. *Paul* sufficiently explains in the same and foregoing Chapter, whom he means, when he calls them, Ch. i. v. 20. *the Wise, the Scribes, the Disputers of this World*, and calls their Wisdom, *the Wisdom of this World*; and v. 22, 23. he sufficiently discovers that he means the several Sects of the *Grecian Philosophers*, who despised the preaching of the Cross as Foolishness. In the 2d Chap. v. 4. he speaks of them, both as Philosophers and Orators, and calls their Harangues, the *persuasive Words of Man's Wisdom*. In the 6th Verse, he calls them *the Principles of this World*: They were, in short, not the stupid, illiterate Herd of Mankind, not the *Ἄλογα ζῶα* mentioned by St. *Peter*, 2 Ep. ii. 12. not the Sots and Drunkards, as some would persuade us; but the Philosophers, Orators, Poets, Politicians, Wits, and Free-thinkers, and as St. *Jude* explains it, v. 19. *All that have not the Spirit, ψυχὴν Πνεύμα μή ἔχοντες*. And to these the *Things of the Spirit of God* must be perfectly unintelligible, nor can they know them, because they are *spiritually discerned*. *For what Man knoweth the Things of a Man, save the Spirit of Man which is in him; even so the Things of God knoweth no Man, but the Spirit of God.* 1 Cor. ii. 11.

LXXI By the Word *Spirit* may be understood, first, that supreme central Faculty, Power, or Capacity of the Soul, by which, thro' the Mediation of the inward and spiritual Senses, she communicates with God and the spiritual World in a real and vital Manner, as she does with the external and visible World, by the Means of the external and bodily Senses;

Senses ; secondly, the *divine Spirit*, God himself, acting in and upon the *supreme Spirit* of Man, in his own essential and eternal Attributes of Justice, Righteousness, Goodness and Truth, whereby *the Spirit of God witnesseth to our Spirit, that we are the Sons of God*, Rom. vii. 16. And thirdly, it generally signifies both together, that is, the *divine Spirit* irradiating *the human*, or *the human* irradiated by *the divine* : In this Sense our blessed Lord means that Passage, *John* iii. 6. Το γεγενημένον σκ Πνεύμα-
το Πνεύμα εστι. And the Man who is under the Guidance and Direction of this divine Spirit, operating thus upon his own Spirit, is called in the Language of Scripture Πνευματικός, or *the spiritual Man*, and *the Child of God*; thus Rom. viii. 8. *Ye are not in the Flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you, now if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* So again, ver. 14. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.*

LXXII. That there is such a Principle, Faculty, or Capacity in Man, superior to all its rational Powers, is not only the plain and express Doctrine of Scripture, *1 Thess.* v. 23. *1 Cor.* ii. 14, 15. *Rom.* vii. 22. *Heb.* iv. 12. but is also as ancient a Doctrine as any in Theology, whether Gentile, Jewish, or Christian; the greatest and most eminent Philosophers of the Gentile World, *Pythagoras, Hierocles, Socrates and Plato*, taught it. And it is most beautifully illustrated in that venerable Piece of ancient Learning, *the Table of Cebes*, where the different Classes or Orders of Men are included within their proper *Septum* or Enclosure, without any Possibility of ascending from the

the Inferior to the Superior, without the Guidance and Assistance of the *Genius* or *Guardian Wisdom*, and proper Dispositions in the Disciples. *Pythagoras* calls it Ἡγιόχον Γνώμην. To which *Hierocles* attributes Ἐρωτικὸν ὅμιλον, whereby it surveys the whole Field of divine Truth, and Διάφανη πρὸς χεῖρα ἀνάλογον; whereby it attracts to it self a similar luciform Vehicle, ἵνα ὅλη πρὸς τὸ Θεῖον ἴδῃ, καὶ τὴν θείαν ἀμοιβασιν κτήσεται. *Naumachius* calls it, Ψυχῆς ὅμιλον φανερὸν, which being united by a kind of mystical Marriage to the Λόγος or *Word* of God brings forth Conceptions full of Light and Glory.

Μιγῆσα

Θεωτεσίοις ἐπέεστι νομάλα φάεια τίκτει.

Phocylides, speaking of the different Powers and Faculties implanted by God in the different Species of Creatures, for their Defence and Ornament, says of Man,

— Λόγος δὲ ἐρυμένος αὐθεώποιοις
Τῆσδε θεοπνεύστες σοφίης λόγος ἐστιν ἀριστος.

Aristotle, in his Ethicks, calls it τὸ κράτιστον καὶ τὸ θεότατον τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν. But *Plato* and his Followers call it, as the Scriptures do, the Πνεῦμα or Spirit, and Νῆσ or Mind, as superior to Ψυχὴ and Πνοή: *Philo* calls it, τὸ Ἡγεμονικὸν, *Allegor. Lib. 1.* and distinguishes betwixt Νῆσ and Πνεῦμα. Speaking of Inspiration, p. 47. he says, τρία γὰρ εἴναι δεῖ, τὸ ἐμπνέον, τὸ δεχόμενον, καὶ τὸ ἐμπνεόμενον. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐμπνέον, ἐστιν ὁ Θεὸς, τὸ δὲ δεχόμενον, ὁ Νῆσ, τὸ δὲ ἐπιπνεόμενον, τὸ Πνεῦμα. Again Ψυχῆς ἡγεμονικόν ἐστιν ὁ Νῆσ, τρίτῳ μόνῳ ἐμπνεῖται ὁ Θεὸς. Again, τὸ μὲν γὰρ πνεῦμα νεγόνται κατὰ τὴν ἴσχυν καὶ συνοίσαν

έυτονίαν καὶ διώματιν. οὐ δέ Πνοὴ ὡς ἀν αὐραῖ τις ἐστι, καὶ αναθυμίασις ἡρεμαία καὶ πραεῖα. Others call this Faculty, τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν αγαθοειδές. The same Distinction is observed in most of the Hellenistical Monuments; in the Song of the three Children, Εὐλογεῖτε τωνέματα καὶ ψυχαὶ δικαίων τὸ Κύριον, Ψ. 63. and in the Fragments of the Prophecy of Enoch, τὰ τωνέματα καὶ αἱ ψυχαὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων σενάζοσιν ἐντυχάνοντα. p. 350. *Spicileg. Grab. Tom. I.* They are the very Words of the Apostle, τὸ πνεῦμα ὑπερεντυχάνει ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν σεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις. Ο δὲ ἐρευνῶν τὰς καρδίας οἶδε τέ τὸ φρόνημα τὸ πνεῦματος, ὅτι κατὰ θεὸν ἐντυχάνει ὑπὲρ αγίων. It is the Language of the Old Testament in innumerable Places, and of the Rabbinical Jews; and to quote all the Passages of the ancient Christian Writers to confirm this Doctrine, would be to write a Volume. Certain it is, that not only their Reasonings as private Men, but even their publick Acts of Church-Government, Communion and Discipline supposed it, and were in a great Measure directed by it, particularly their Office of Baptism, Confirmation, their Distinction of Catechumens and Faithful, who are frequently called Πνευματικοὶ καὶ Πνευματόφρεοι. *Ignat. Ep. ad Eph. Irenaeus, p. 405, &c.* These were supposed to be so enlightened by the Holy Spirit, as to have a divine and supernatural Knowledge of the Mysteries of the Christian Religion. They were supposed by being united to Christ their Head, to receive from him the *Chrism* or *Unction* *by which they knew all these Things*, *I Epist. John ii. 20. And this Chrism or Unction was supposed to abide in them, that they needed not that any Man should teach them, because the same Unction taught them*

them all Things, and was Truth and no Lie, Ch. iii.

27. Hence came that Form of speaking so usual among the Ancients, when they touched upon any Doctrines or Mysteries which the Catechumens understood not, *Ισασιν οι μεμυημένοι.*

LXXXIII. Nor is this only the concurrent Sense of Antiquity, it is the Voice of Nature, and of *Reason*. If we enter into our selves, and examine the Recesses of our own Breasts, we cannot but find something independent of all corporeal Objects and Ideas whatsoever; something that likes or dislikes, that approves or condemns our Thoughts or Actions; something that checks us in our Career, that sours our Pleasures, and tells us how vain, empty, and unsatisfying all our worldly Enjoyments are: We there perceive, that in the midst of worldly Blessings, we are still in want of something to make our Happiness compleat and lasting; there we discover an inward Spring, a secret Principle of Truth, an infinite Desire of Good, and this not produced by, or dependent upon any corporeal Object whatsoever, and therefore not to be satisfied by it, for whatever any Thing can produce, that it can also satisfy; but that this inward Spring and Desire of the Soul cannot be filled or satisfied by any Thing material or sensible, is acknowledged by all Mankind. This is that which baffles all the Attempts of wicked Men to make themselves easy in their Sins; in spite of all their Efforts to the contrary, it will still be uppermost, accusing and condemning their irregular and irrational Pleasures and Designs; Honour, Power, Riches, Pleasures, &c. may for a Time stifle and smother, but they cannot satisfy or extinguish it. On the contrary, we have many

noble and illustrious Instances, where in Poverty and Contempt, the sharpest Pains and severest Mortifications, it is easy, serene, triumphant. This is what in common Speech is called *Conscience*, in the Scripture Phrase, *the Spirit or inward Man*.

LXXIV. This *Spirit or inward Man* is superior to the *rational Soul*, or the *Soul considered as rational*; for like a mighty Monarch it reigns and governs in some Degree in the Hearts of all Men, from the greatest Prince to the meanest Peasant; it presides over and controuls all the Actions and Designs of the *rational Soul*, and no created Power can influence, byas, or determine its Judgment. And whereas we may observe, that the Desires, Views, Pursuits, and Opinions of the *rational Soul* vary an infinite Number of Ways, according to the different Constitutions and Temperaments of Bodies, and according to the several Degtees and Measures of Knowledge and Experience of particular Persons; we find here on the contrary, that in all Ages, Nations, and Persons there is the same Spring and Principle of Truth, the same indelible and infinite Desire of Good, how much soever they may be mistaken as to Particulars, in taking that for true and good which is not so: So that all Men in general love *Truth*, and desire *Good* as such; and pretend to make the one the universal *Rule*, and the other the ultimate *End* of all their Actions. And as we actually perceive that *this Spirit or inward Man* wills, desires, discerns, and judges, even in Contradiction to our natural Appetites and Desires; and seeing no Being can will, discern, or judge but what it *knows*, nor know any Thing but what it first *perceives*, nor *perceive* any Thing

Thing but by some *Sense* or other; it evidently follows that this *Spirit* or *inward Man* must be endued with a spiritual Sense, or Senses to perceive and apprehend spiritual Objects. The Objects that upon first View present themselves to the spiritual Senses are *Truth, Justice, Goodness, Righteousness, &c.* we very sensibly feel and perceive the Impressions they make upon the *Spirit*; but they are of such a *spiritual* exalted Nature, and so far transcend those Ideas and Conceptions which arise from the visible World, that we neither know how to express them in Words, nor to represent them as they are in themselves by any sensible Ideas. On the contrary, they are infinitely more quick, lively, and penetrating than any corporeal Sensations, else how should it be that many Men not only deny themselves the Pleasures of Sense, but even chuse to endure the most exquisite Torments, rather than act contrary to those inward Impressions made upon their *Spirit*? The Objects therefore of the *spiritual* Senses, are in their own Nature, *powerful, spiritual, infinite*.

LXXV. As in the visible material World, the *Senses*, the *Desires*, the *Objects*, and the *Medium* are all exactly proportioned one to another, and finite: So in the *Spirit* or *inward Man*, seeing it is endued with a boundless *Capacity* and *Desire*, and that the Objects themselves are in their own Nature infinite; it follows that the spiritual Senses must be capable of infinite Perception, and the *Medium*, in and through which they perceive, must be proportioned both to the Senses and the Objects; that is, must be infinite. But as whatever is infinite must center in *G O D*, who is the one, only, infinite and eternal Author and

Fountain

Fountain of all that is infinite, that is of his own infinite *Attributes, Perfections, and Emanations*; it follows that *GOD* is both the Object of the *Spirit*, and the *Medium* whereby he discovers himself to it. And as in the Nature and Analogy of Things, the *Light* of the visible Sun is the Medium through which material Objects are seen and perceived in our System: So the essential Light of God, who is his only-begotten, co-essential Son, the second Person in the *Ever Blessed Trinity*, who is *God of God, Light of Light*, is the sole Medium by and through which his Nature and infinite Perfections are to be perceived and understood. So then we must either be entirely deprived of Faculties for Communion with the spiritual World (*i. e.* we must be deprived of the only Means of our supreme Felicity, and for attaining the End for which alone we were created, *viz.* Communion with God and the spiritual World) or else we must have a Principle or Faculty in us superior to *Reason*. For it is evidently plain, that *Reason* is not that Faculty in compounded intelligent Beings, which in the Order of Nature and the Analogy of Things, is appropriated to the spiritual World: But as we are endued with bodily Senses and a rational Soul to communicate with the material and visible World; so we are with a *Spirit* and *spiritual Senses* to communicate with the *spiritual*. And this is what the Author to the *Hebrews* means, *Heb. v. 14. by having our Senses exercised to discern Good and Evil.* This is that *Spirit* which (our blessed Lord says) *is willing, though the Flesh is weak.* It is a constant, vital, ardent, unextinguishable Desire of the Soul after its *supreme Felicity*, *viz.*

viz. *the Enjoyment of the supreme Good*, of being reunited to the supreme infinite Being, the Creator, the Father, the Centre of all Beings, particularly spiritual, analogous to that of *Attraction* or *Gravitation* in the material System.

LXXVI. These distinct Principles have their proper Objects adapted to them, in the most exact Harmony and Proportion; so that as in the natural Body, the Eye cannot perceive the Harmony of Sounds, nor the Ear apprehend the Beauty of Colours, nor the Symmetry of Proportion; nor any one Sense taste or apprehend what are the proper Objects of another: And as the united Power of all the Senses cannot apprehend, much less demonstrate, any abstracted Truth, no more than a Man can smell a Syllogism, or eat a Demonstration; so neither can all the Powers of Reason apprehend those spiritual Truths and Mysteries of Religion, which are only to be apprehended by the Spirit; which is with Regard to them, the same as the Organs of Sense are to their proper Objects. Hence it is evident, that he who would judge, determine, and pursue the practical Conclusions of those Determinations, about the Nature and Properties of *spiritual* and *divine* Things, by his *Reason*, acts as contrary to *Reason*, as he that should attempt to see without Eyes, or hear without Ears. The highest that this feeble Faculty can pretend to in these Matters, is from the known, certain and experienced Nature and Properties of material Things, (to which *Reason* is in some measure adequate) to apprehend a proper Analogy, and from the visible Things of this lower World, which are low Images of

of the spiritual and invisible Things of God, to frame imperfect Likenesses and Representations of these superiour Objects; and that, in short, is all that *Reason* can do in these sublime Matters. There is no apprehending worthily the Things of God, but by the *Spirit of Truth* operating upon *our own Spirit*. For *the Spirit beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the Sons of God*, Rom. viii. 16. And this in short helps us to the true Notion of evangelical *Faith*, which is something more than a rational Assent to evident Propositions, which make (as a learned Man was pleased to express it) *the whole Syllogism of Faith*. It is *the Light, the Truth, the Power, the Gift of God*; it is the Substance or Essence, the *Τηρόσαρις* of those Things that are the Objects of a Christian's Hope, a real substantial Efflux and Communication from the heavenly and spiritual World, upon the Soul of a Believer; in which Light he sees what the natural Eye cannot, he perceives clearly those Truths, which we call Articles of Faith, which cannot be apprehended by *Reason*; the Evidence of Things not seen, *Ἐλεῖχος*, a spiritual Perception, Taste, View of the invisible Things of God; and this Notion of Faith runs through the whole xith Chapter to the *Hebrews*, which is therefore called by the Apostle, *Eph. ii. 8. The Gift of God*.

LXXVII. From these Principles we may discover the Difference betwixt *Historical* and *Divine Faith*, and between the moral Certainty of the one, and the infallible Evidence of the other. The *Historical* is founded upon *humane Reason*, and consequently is an Act of the rational Soul influenced and determined

mined by the ordinary Irradiations of divine Truth, whereby it assents to and believes the Scripture History. The *Certainty* of this *Faith* is only *moral*, depending solely on the Veracity of *Christ* and his Apostles and Witnesses: But *Divine Faith* is a new and living Principle, a divine essential Light manifested to the Spirit of a Christian, by which he clearly and distinctly sees and feels those divine Truths and Doctrines as they are in themselves, and the natural Congruity between them and his own Faculties; and in consequence thereof, he cannot but assent to and cherish them, and endeavour to live up to them, to hunger and thirst more and more after them, as his spiritual Food and Nourishment, as the only sure and certain Means of procuring his Perfection and Happiness. The one is in a manner wholly *external*; the other *internal*: The one represents the Doctrines of *Christ* as burdensom, and opposite to Flesh and Blood, or the *natural Man*; the other as pleasant and easy, as natural and congenial to the *inward Man*. This is what the Wise Man means, when he says of *Wisdom*, that *her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness*, Prov. iii. 17. The one is, as I may say, a *dry, barren, and superficial Knowledge*, which the Devil and wicked Men may have as well as others, *James* xii. 19. *Acts* viii. 13. the other imprints a *living, clear, and satisfactory Conviction* upon the Heart, and is always accompanied with such divine Power, and Efficacy, as displays itself in the purest Acts of Love towards God, of Charity towards all Men, and every other good Work: The one is like the Relation of a Traveller; the other is Vision and Experience itself: The last so far transcends the former, that our blessed Lord himself, in-

stead of appealing to moral Evidence, expressly tells us, *If any Man will do the Will of him that sent me, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God*, John vii. 17. In a word, as the visible and material World is the Object of the *outward or natural Man*, and the Light of the Sun the *Medium* whereby we see and perceive material Objects; so God himself is the only proper and adequate Object of the *Spirit or inward Man*, and his own *divine and essential Light*, the sole *Medium* in and through which we perceive God as he is in himself, and the Reality of spiritual Truths as they are in him; and consequently, as far as the divine essential Light of God transcends the visible Light of the Sun, so far does *Divine Faith* transcend *Natural Reason*, and *Historical Faith*, which is founded upon it.

LXXVIII. This mysterious Communication of divine Light to the Soul, is in the Language of the Old Testament, emphatically called *Σοφία*, or *Wisdom*, and accordingly is in innumerable Places of the Books of *Job*, *Proverbs*, *Psalms*, *Wisdom* and *Ecclesiasticus*, spoken of as the Gift of God, not to be obtained by the acutest *Reason* or the clearest Head, but is the Reward of Purity, Humility, and Prayer. Thus holy *Job*, Ch. xxviii. v. 20. *Whence cometh Wisdom, and where is the Place of Understanding? God understandeth the Way thereof, and knoweth the Place thereof. And unto Man he said, The Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom, and to depart from Evil is Understanding.* But, Ch. xxxii. v. 8. he is more express, *There is a Spirit in Man, and the Inspiration of the most High giveth him Understanding. All Wisdom cometh from the Lord,* (saith the Son of Sirach, Ch. i. v. 1, 5.) *and is with him for ever.*

ever. *The Word of God most high, is the Fountain of Wisdom, and her Ways are everlasting Commandments.* This is that Wisdom, which is the Glory and Perfection of our Nature, of which so many excellent Things are spoken in the above mentioned Books. The Author of the Book of *Wisdom*, Ch. viii. 21. speaks thus, *When I perceived that I could not otherwise obtain her, except God gave her me (and that was a Point of Wisdom also to know whose Gift she was) I prayed unto the Lord, and sought him, and with my whole Heart I said.* Then follows in the ixth Ch. the excellent Prayer he used on that Occasion, in the 6th Verse of which he says, *For though a Man be never so perfect among the Children of Men, yet if thy Wisdom be not with him, he shall be nothing regarded.* This is that Wisdom which St. James calls, *The Wisdom that cometh from above,* James iii. 17. *which if any Man want, he must ask it of God, who giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him,* James i. 5. This *Wisdom is a never-failing Treasure, which they that use, become the Friends of God,* Wisd. vii. 14. *She is the Breath of the Power of God, and a pure Influence flowing from the Glory of the Almighty, therefore can no defiled Thing fall into her: She is the Brightness of the everlasting Light, the unspotted Mirrour of the Power of God, and the Image of his Goodness; and being but one, she can do all Things, and remaining in her self, she can make all Things new, and in all Ages entring into Holy Souls maketh them Friends of God and Prophets, for God loveth none but him that liveth with Wisdom,* 25, 26, 27, 28. *But into a malicious Soul Wisdom shall not enter, nor dwell in the Body that is subject to Sin,* Ch. i. 4.

They can no more apprehend spiritual Truths, than a blind Man can see Colours, or a deaf Man hear Sounds, each of them wanting proper Organs to convey this Sensation to their Souls.

LXXIX. These divine Truths thus revealed in *the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*, 1 Cor. ii. 4. and proceeding from the *same Fountain of Truth*, and thro' the *same Medium*, were communicated to holy Men of Old, with irresistible Evidence, as *the Truth and Will of God*, in a consistent uniform manner, without the least Shadow of Obscurity or Uncertainty; just as if 10 or 1000 Men, with Organs rightly disposed, should view the same Object at the same Distance, thro' a proper *Medium*, they would all view it in the same manner. These Revelations of theirs were committed to Writing, and were at last collected into one Volume, as the *Scriptures or revealed Will of God*, for the Instruction and Edification of others; the chief Heads or Articles of which were afterwards, by the Wisdom of the Church, digested into short Formularies called *Creeds*, intended chiefly for the Use of Catechumens or young Candidates, which tho' not to be comprehended by *Reason*, yet are not contrary to *Reason*, but are discerned by the enlightened and spiritual Mind to be not only agreeable to *Reason*, but to be *Truth and Reason* it self.

LXXX. We are not therefore to wonder, that the Wits, the Beaux, the Criticks, and all the Herd of Triflers cavil at this Way of talking, and call it *Cant and Enthusiasm*. Were the Doctrine of Colours, and the several beautiful Varieties of Lights and Shades ever so accurately treated of before a Man born blind, or a Lecture in Opticks to be read at a

Horse

Horse-Race, or in a Country-Fair, both would certainly be voted down as unintelligible Jargon and Nonsense; whereas were the Eyes of one to be opened, and the Understandings of the others gradually instructed and prepared, they would at once perceive, what no Chain of Reasoning could otherwise teach them. The only Answer that can be given them, is to beg them to consider coolly and impartially the strict and proper Analogy there is betwixt the Nature of *Light* and *divine Truth*, betwixt *natural* and *divine Light*. God himself is said to be *Light*, John i Ep. i. 5. *The Father of Lights*, James i. 17. *He sent forth his Son to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the Glory of his People Israel*, Luke ii. 32. and sent *John*, who was in his Day a *burning and shining Light, to prepare his Way before him*, John v. 35. His Apostles and Ministers are called *the Light of the World*. Mat. v. 14. His faithful Servants are called *Children of Light*. Eph. v. 8. The whole Oeconomy of the Gospel, is called *the Light of the glorious Gospel*. 2 Cor. iv. 4. and agreeably to this, Baptism, which is the solemn Rite of Initiation into the Christian Church and *the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*, was among other significant Titles frequently called Φώτισμός, as it frequently occurs in St. Chrysostom Hom. 13. in *Heb. Nazianzen Orat. 40. de Bapt. Dionysius Areopag. Hierar. Eccl. Ch. ii. the Council of Laodicea, Can. 47.* because it was an Admission into a Principle of divine Light and Knowledge, as the Reason is given by Clemens Alexandrinus, *Pædag. Lib. I. Cap. 6.* * *Being baptized, we are enlightened, being enlightened, we are adopted to be the Sons of God, by this*

* Βαπτιζόμενοι φωτίζόμενα, φωτίζομενοι φοτοικένετα, φοτοικάδειας τελετήμενα, τελετήμενοι απανταλιζόμενα. : Adop.

*Adoption we are perfected, by this Perfection we are made immortal: A little after, * Baptism is called Illumination, because thereby we are made capable of seeing the Divine and saving Light, and this Divine Light, is God himself. And the most classical Expositors in the Church of England do make them, that are called in Scripture the Enlightened, to be only the Baptized: So that Baptism and Illumination are usually taken for synonymous Terms. And it is by some supposed, that the internal Light or Glory of Baptism did, in the early Days of its Administration, break forth externally by a visible Coruscation, like that Glory that appeared in the Tabernacle after its Consecration, Exod. xl. 34, 35. and in the Temple, after its Dedication by King Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 10, 11. Both which were but Types and Figures of the Bodies of Christians, which are therefore called the Temples of the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. vi. 19. Hence came that significant Ceremony in the ancient Church, that when the Catechumens had renounced the Devil with their Faces turned to the West (the Reason of which, saith St. Cyril of Jerusalem, is worth knowing, *Mystagog. I. §. 2. p. 279.* † As the West is the Place of Darkness, and the Devil is the Prince of the Powers of Darkness; therefore you symbolically turn to the West, when you renounce the Prince and Works of Darkness) they then turned to the East, † the*

* Φωτισμα ἢ (καλεῖται) δι' ἐν τῷ ἀγιον ἐκέντο φῶς τῷ σωτήρεον ἐπο-
πλωεῖ. ταῦτη δι' ἐν τῷ Θεῖον ὀξύωπερδημ.

† Αναβάσιον γνῶ ἐπειδὴ τὸ φανερόν τοκότης τύπῳ αἱ δυτικαὶ,
ἐπειδὴ ἢ τοκότῳ τυγχάνων, εἰ τοκότῳ ἔχει ἢ τὸ κεφτόν, ταῦτα χάρει
συμβολικῶς πρὸς δυτικὰς διπλέτοντες διπλασιεῖται τῷ τοκότεντῷ καὶ ζο-
φιεῷ "Αρχοντί.

† Προς Ἀναβάσιλα τῷ φωτὸς τῷ χιεύον τίτε σὸι ἐλίγετο εἰπεῖν.
Πιεύνει τὸ Πατέρα, καὶ τὸν τὸν, καὶ τὸν Αγιον Πνεῦμα.

Region of Light, when you were commanded to repeat this short Confession: I believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, &c. Which Custom of turning to the East at the repeating of the *Creed*, is retained in the Christian Church to this Day. All which, with innumerable other Instances that might be produced from Scriptures and Antiquity, shew the Analogy to be strictly just and proper.

LXXXI. Let it now be supposed that there was a whole Nation of Men born blind. That some eminent Physician in pure Compassion should come and offer to restore them all to their Sight, by putting them into a proper Regimen, which was the only possible Method of Cure. We may suppose also, that it had been a constant Tradition for many Hundreds of Years past, that such a Person should come among them, and the Time and Circumstances of his coming; that he should declare to them that he was the Person foretold so many Ages ago, that was to open their Eyes, and bring them *out of Darkness into Light*, and tell them withal, the many beautiful and useful Discoveries they would make, so soon as they should recover their Sight, and see Things in their true Light. Suppose a small Number of Men prevail'd upon by his candid Reasonings, and great Compassion, should make the Experiment, and the Success should answer, they would certainly see Things quite different from what in their State of Blindness they had conceived them to be, and would all agree to publish their new Discoveries, to encourage the rest of their Neighbours, and Countrymen to make the same Experiment. Should they tell them that

that they have now no more occasion for a Staff to guide them, or to be perpetually feeling and groping about to find what Bodies lay near them, to injure or intangle them, but that at one View they could see all around about them, could discern the different Magnitudes, Dimensions, Figures, Colours and Proportions of Bodies; certain it is, they would hear it as a Sort of mysterious unintelligible Jargon: And if they should fall to reasoning one with another upon these odd Expressions, to which they could affix no proper nor adequate Ideas, any Body may imagine what a deal of Philosophical Nonsense would be uttered upon such an Occasion; and if for want of apprehending the Force of their Reasonings, they should obstinately resolve never to put themselves into the Regimen proposed for their Cure, but dispute and revile those who offer to assist them, and tell them, that all their Pretensions to Eye-sight were nothing but down-right *Enthusiasm*, let any Man of common Sense judge what Sort of Treatment such People would deserve. And this, in short, is the very Case of Christianity, as St. Peter declares, 2 Ep. i. 16, 17, 18, 19. *We have not* (says he) *followed cunningly devised Fables*, when we made known to you the Power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were Eye Witnesses of his Majesty. For he received from God the Father Honour and Glory, when there came such a Voice to him from the excellent Glory, *This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Here is the Testimony of the Senses, which claims their Assent or historical Faith. *We have also a more sure Word*, (or the additional Assurance) of Prophecy, (which gives you all the rational Conviction you can wish for, that he was the Son of God,

if you will but examine and compare these different Prophecies together) to which you do well that you take heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place. A Light indeed it is, but not the highest and truest Light; it is no more than a Lamp or Candle, (but who ever lighted a Candle to see Day-Light?) to supply the Absence of the Sun, till the Day dawn, and the Day Star arise in your Heart, with unspeakable, and irresistible Light and Glory; in which Light you shall see Light, even that Light by which *Mysteries are revealed to the meek*, Eccl. iii. 19. and the deep Things of God, which are *hid from the wise and prudent, and are revealed unto Babes*, Luke x. 21. To this Light bear all the Prophets witness, and all the great and good Men among Gentiles, Jews, and Christians in every Age, and every Nation; and which our Holy Mother the Church of *England* asserts in all her holy Offices, and particularly enjoins us to pray for in the Collects for St. *John the Evangelist, and Whitsunday*. Hear the devout *Tho. a Kempis Lib. III. Ch. 2.* *Lord, let not Moses and the Prophets speak; but speak thou, who enlightenest and inspiriest the Prophets. They are able to sound forth Words; but they give not Spirit. They speak finely; but if thou art silent, they enkindle not the Heart. They deliver the Letter; but thou openest the Soul. They utter Mysteries; but thou unlockest the Understanding of the sealed Secrets. They speak forth thy Commandments; but thou helpest to perform them. They shew the way; but thou strengthenest us to walk therein. They act only from without; but thou instructest and enlightenest from within.* But against all this our Adversaries stop their Ears, shut their Eyes, and harden their Hearts, and against the strongest

Convictions of *rational* and *divine Light*, walk on still in Darkness, *which they love rather than Light*, because their *Deeds* are *evil*, neither will they come to the *Light*, lest their *Deeds* should be reproved, John iii. 19, 20.

LXXXII. In short, the Root of all that Scepticism and Infidelity which at present abounds among us, and aims at nothing less than the unsettling all Foundations of Religion, is the Wickedness and Immorality of Mens Lives. The young, the gay, the thoughtless, who shine and flutter about this great Town, who enjoy a Flush of Blood and Fortune, who are in the Bloom and Flower of Youth, surrounded with Temptations, and enchanted with Pleasures, are not at Leisure to think gravely and seriously of abstracted Truths; and tho' sometimes, under some little Mortifications of Sicknes, ill Fortune, Spleen, Satiety of Pleasure, or the Pangs of a Debauch, they may be forced to retire, and think whether they will or no, yet their Thoughts are then so discomposed and superficial, that they cannot enter into the Nature of Things, nor form any just Conclusions or Resolutions upon them: Or if by chance they should, they find themselves so uneasy under a Chain of Reflections that gall and disquiet them, that they are forced to silence the Reproaches of their Consciences, and by new Debauches endeavour to blot out the Remembrance of old Ones. And in the mean time, as their Faculties grow daily more feeble, and their Consciences more hardened, those Reflections that once startled them, seem to lose their Force, are less pungent and affecting; so that at last they begin to slight and disbelieve them, and muster up all the little Arguments, that the Devil and corrupt Nature can suggest

gest, that they are vain Terrors, mere Bugbears to fright Children and Fools. And as they grow older, and consequently less able to Sin, and therefore less diverted from thinking seriously, they are then forced to defend and propagate their Infidelity, that they may by this means quiet their own Consciences, and make the Cause more reputable by the Weight and Number of its Patrons and Proselytes.

LXXXIII. Having thus found out the Root of the Distemper, we may be more easily directed to the Cure. As a wicked and immoral Life is the certain Cause of Infidelity and spiritual Blindness, so nothing contributes more to the Perception of Truth, than the living a righteous, temperate, sober, and holy Life. And now (Gentlemen) let me address my self to you as Philosophers, Lovers of Truth, Enemies to Error and venerable Superstition, as I also profess my self to be; your Title and Profession obliges you to prove and examine all Things, before you determine your Judgments. Let me conjure you in his Name, who is the *God of Truth*, and by all the Regard you bear to that venerable Name, and the Dignity of your own Understandings, that you would at least consider the Proposal here offer'd you, and if you can be convinced, that there is any Shadow of *Reason* or Probability in it, resolve to follow it but by way of Experiment; renounce your Sins, mortify your Lusts, lay aside your Prejudices, be obedient, innocent, and simple as little Children, and then begin your Enquiries anew, seek for Wisdom as Silver, and dig for her as for hid Treasures, and you shall certainly find her. *If thou desire Wisdom, (saith the wise Son of Sirach, Ch. i. ¶ 26.) keep the Commandments, and the Lord shall give her unto thee; for the Fear of the*

Lord

Lord is Wisdom and Instruction, and Faith and Meekness are his Delight. In a Word, the first Rudiments of Christian Knowledge are laid in the Heart; do ye therefore but punctually live up to the Morality of natural Religion, and that will dispose you by degrees for Christianity, and that Wisdom that cometh from above. Nor is there any Hazard or Danger in the Experiment, you venture nothing that is worth keeping, in pursuit of an invaluable Treasure; you are abridged none of the real Comforts of Life, but only to enjoy them in a more *rational* Manner; and if after all, the Success should not answer, should there be no Truth, no Reality in this solemn Affair of Religion, should there be no future World, no Immortality of the Soul; why, even then you could be no Losers, we should all sink together into eternal Oblivion, and you would never regret the little Gratifications, if any, that you resigned in this. But if it should be true, should you find an eternal Inheritance, an incorruptible Crown of Glory, reserved for you as a Reward of your short imperfect Obedience; how inexpressibly great will your Joy, your Reward, your Happiness be, and how infinite will the Disproportion appear, betwixt your Case and theirs, who are condemned to lose this blessed Inheritance, and to be shut up for ever in Darkness, Misery and Despair? Since then it plainly appears, that in the worst View of the Case, the Hazard you run bears no degree of Proportion to the Prize proposed; that you venture nothing to obtain every Thing; you must quit your Pretensions to *Reason* and common Sense, if you doubt one Moment which to chuse.

F I N I S.



